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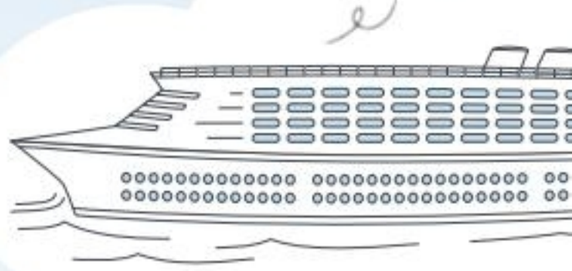

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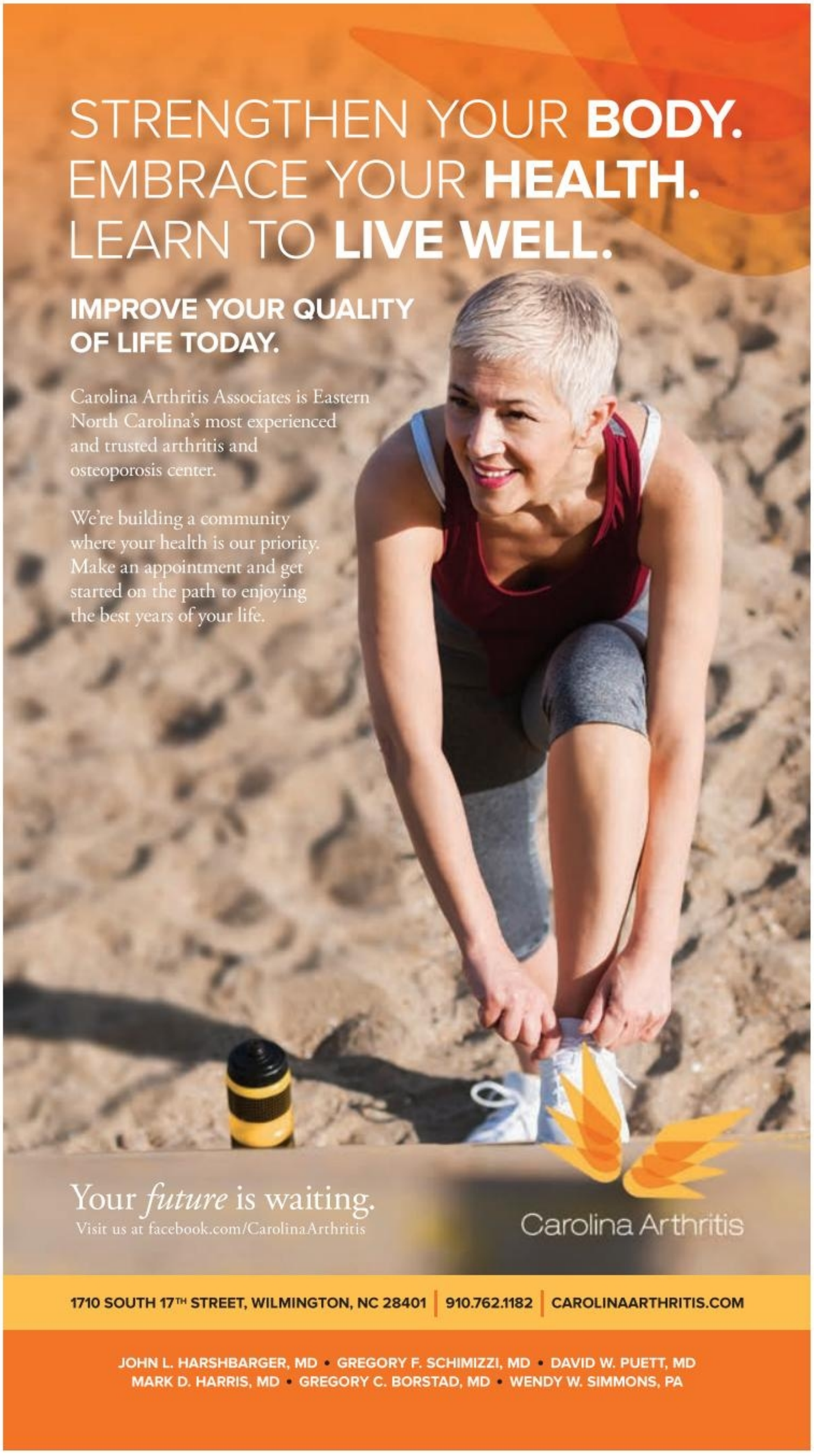
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Supper on the Porch

Old friends, a well-traveled table, a summer evening to remember

By Jim Dodson

On a fine summer night not long ago, seven friends came to supper on the porch.

They arrived bearing good wine, eager to see what we'd done with the old house we purchased six months ago. Since five of the seven guests were also serious wine buffs, bottles were quickly opened and the party moved out to our huge screened porch where my wife had set our antique English wedding table for supper.

The porch is a large screened affair that spans almost the entire back portion of the house. It features a floor and foundation made from antique brick and exposed beams with large old-style ceiling fans overhead.

Quite honestly, when we first saw it, we weren't sure what to do with such a large empty space. The screens were old and dusty and the floor was uneven in places. Moreover, off the west end of the porch was a terrace with brick planters overgrown with English ivy set beneath a large pergola that had clearly seen better days. Since I knew this house as a boy — it sits two doors from the house where I grew up and was my favorite house in the neighborhood as a kid — I remembered how the Corry family seemed to live on this porch way back when, in part because it sat beneath hundred-year-old white oaks and a lower canopy of dogwoods and silver bell trees, providing deep shade and a cool retreat on the hottest of summer days. I remembered Mama Merle loving her big sprawling porch.

One early thought we had was to replace the screens with oversized weather-tight windows and create a four-season family room that could function as a small ballroom in a pinch. We also contemplated halving the porch in size and adding an outdoor fireplace — or even removing the rambling old extension altogether to expand a yard that resembled an urban jungle.

"Let's live with it a while," proposed my ever-practical bride. "The porch may grow on us — and tell us what we should do."

In the meantime, over the winter and early spring, I knocked apart the aging pergola and opened up the terrace, cleaning out the overgrown planter beds and filling them with young hosta plants. I also removed a dozen wicked Mahonia plants and a small acre of English ivy and runaway wisteria, and began creating a Japanese shade garden beneath the dogwoods and silver bells.

By the time true spring arrived my back garden was looking rather promising, but the big old porch remained empty until my wife had an interesting idea.

"Let's move our wedding table out there and make this our three-season dining room," she said, pointing out that the size of the porch made it essentially indifferent to weather.

Our dining table is a beautiful old thing I spotted in a Portland, Maine, English antique shop and purchased for my fiancée as a wedding present two decades ago. It's an early 19th-century English farm table from Oxfordshire that came with its own documenting papers listing at least a dozen a family names that had allegedly owned it before us. Beyond its impressive strength and workmanship, the thing I most love about it are the nicks and dents and discolorations of time that mark the table's long journey through this world. Our family has gathered around it for every holiday meal since the day it arrived in our household, and sometimes as I listen to the eddies of conversations that take place around it, I can't help but think about the voices that table has heard over the past century and a half, the intimate stories, the debates and conversations, fiery oaths and whispers of love.

Before moving it out to Miss Merle's porch, however, my wife set about cleaning every surface of the porch including the elegant ceiling fans and screens while I got to work on the floor, leveling the bricks and using a distressing technique to paint the brick floor a faded woodland green.

That's when a kind of alchemy began to take place.

The big room suddenly seemed to come alive with a human charm all its own. Soon we added plants and an antique sideboard that had never fit the in the main house even found a destined spot on the porch. I hung the custom-made iron candelabra from our old house in Maine and my bride strung small clear white lights along the roofline as a finishing touch. We suddenly had the perfect place for a pair of fine old wicker chairs we'd kept in storage forever, and an antique iron table and reading lamp that had never quite found their place. A large sisal rug Wendy found online was the final piece of the puzzle.

By the time our first supper on the porch was well underway, our guests were all commenting on the beauty of the room beneath the trees.

"I don't think I've seen a more beautiful porch," said my childhood friend, Susan, who lived in Charleston, South Carolina for years and has a designer's eye for everything. "It's so rustic and simple."

"Don't change a thing about this porch," urged Joe, a buddy from high school who is an exceptional builder and expert on wood. He made some excellent small suggestions about replacing the vinyl soffits with wooden panels with inset lighting that would make the room even more dramatic.

The lively dinner went on much longer than expected. The stories flew, the candles flickered, the wine flowed, and the earthy scent of my restored garden drifted through the screens. At their end of the table, the wine buffs had a fine time swapping tales of their intricate journeys toward grape enlightenment.

Sipping my French sparkling water, it was enough for me to simply sit and listen to my friends go on about life and wine in ways I suspect that old wedding table had heard before over the years, taking its own pleasure in our screen porch fellowship. Don and Cindy talked about their extensive wine tours out

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West. Susan told a charming tale about being whisked away by a friend to Europe where she was put up and feted at a pair of the most elite vineyards in France and Italy. "It was like something from a fairy tale," she admitted.

Somewhere about the time the strawberry and whipped cream cake was being served, my closest table companion leaned over and mentioned to me that she was thinking of walking home. It wasn't far, only a few blocks, and the night was gorgeously moonlit. "They won't even notice I'm gone," Terry said with a coy smile, finishing her own glass of white wine.

Terry is my oldest friend Patrick's wife. I've known her since we sat near each other in high school choir 45 years ago. A few years back Terry and Patrick sold their big house on the north side of town and moved back to the old neighborhood, a move that in part inspired my wife and me to do the same. We now lived just three long blocks apart.

"Mulligan and I will walk with you," I proposed, prompting my favorite dog to dutifully bolt for the kitchen door.

So off we went beneath a nearly full moon that displayed one exceptionally bright planet just beneath its southern rim. Terry asked me if I knew the planet's name but I couldn't be sure—I guessed Mercury, incorrectly. Still, it was lovely strolling along our darkened street with its ancient trees making the darkness seem even deeper, the neighborhood even quieter. As it happened, Terry and I both had recently undergone similar kinds of surgeries. We made little jokes about that fact—at least I did—and Terry, who is one year older and many years wiser, admonished me that I would feel fatigued for many weeks yet to come, not to push myself back into my usual 15-hour work routine.

"The world will still be there after you take time to rest and heal," she pointed out.

"Suppers like tonight may help," I said.

"That porch is wonderful," she came back "I'm so glad you didn't change it."

"I think it changed us," I agreed, kissing her cheek goodnight.

On the walk back to our house, I was thinking how all it took was a little time and Wifely creativity, a well-traveled table and a circle of close friends breaking bread and drinking wine to transform a big empty space into something intimate and special. Objects, like people, respond to love, and since that first night of supper and fellowship, the big old porch has become my favorite spot where I do everything, from writing before dawn to reading at night. It is my sanctuary where I just sit and plot my garden or simply daydream and maybe even heal.

Halfway home, something else wonderful happened. A large night bird swooped low over my head and rose to an arching limb 20 feet above Old Man Dodson and his dog. I shined my light upward and discovered, rather startlingly, a large snowy owl staring down at me with an imperturbable calmness. The only one I'd ever seen was back home in Maine. I knew that snowy owls nested in the Arctic tundra and wondered how far this old fellow had come—or had yet to go.

Back in our driveway, the departing wine buffs were looking up at the moon with celestial-reading apps on their I-phones. What an age of wonders, I thought. An ancient owl and phones that could decipher the night sky—all within the same block.

I told them about the snowy owl visiting just down the street.

"There's a sign of some kind," said Susan with a husky laugh.

Joe the naturalist pointed out that eagles and northern species of owls had been returning to the city's northern lakes of late, adopting new habitats in an ever-changing world.

He also pointed out that the bright planet was, in fact, Jupiter, and that at least three of Jupiter's four moons were visible at that moment, a rare celestial event.

"That makes two in one night," I heard myself say, thinking how far we've all come, how far we've yet to go.

Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com. Read more about Opti the Mystic and Mulligan in The Range Bucket List, *Dodson's new book, available everywhere.*

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July 22, 25, 27, 29 Much Ado About Nothing

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Mobbs in Perspective

Acme Art Studios is mounting a retrospective of the work of painter Rick Mobbs (1951–2016), a trailblazer and beloved figure in the Wilmington arts community. Born in Pinehurst, Mobbs attended the Museum School in Boston and East Carolina University, where he received both an MA and MFA in studio arts. A founding member of the nascent Acme Art Studios, he worked professionally in Wilmington as a scenic artist, illustrator and sculptor on more than 80 film and television productions, and his paintings and metal sculptures are evocative of unknown spiritual worlds and mythology, both real and imagined. The retrospective will feature works from private collections and family, as well as other artists' works done in the 1990s in studio collaborations hosted by Mobbs. Friday, July 28, 6-9 p.m. Acme Art Studios, 711 N. Fifth Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 232-0027.

My Gypsy Lover

Based on the novel by Prosper Merimee, George Bizet's opera *Carmen* tells the story of a young Spanish soldier who is seduced by the wily and exotic gypsy Carmen. High drama, toreadors and death ensue! Considered scandalous when first performed in Paris in 1875, *Carmen* is now one of the most popular operas in the world and is considered Bizet's masterpiece. Opera Wilmington's production of *Carmen* — which stars Chelsea Keane Holmes in the title role and Michael Rallis as her lover Don Jose — will be staged July 21 (opening night gala), July 23, July 28 and July 30th. Tickets: (910) 962-3500 or opera-wilmington.org.

Good Chemistry

Shakespeare, anyone? The Alchemical Theatre of Wilmington, a new classical theater company dedicated to the works of the Bard — and the folks who brought you *Shakespeare and Bowie* as well as last summer's production of *Measure for Measure* downtown—will present their production of *Much Ado About Nothing* as part of this year's Lumina Festival of the Arts. July 22, 25, 27, and 29 at 7:30 p.m.; July 25 at 2:00 p.m. UNCW Mainstage Theatre, 5270 Randall Drive, Wilmington. Tickets $15-25. Info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/arts/lumina.

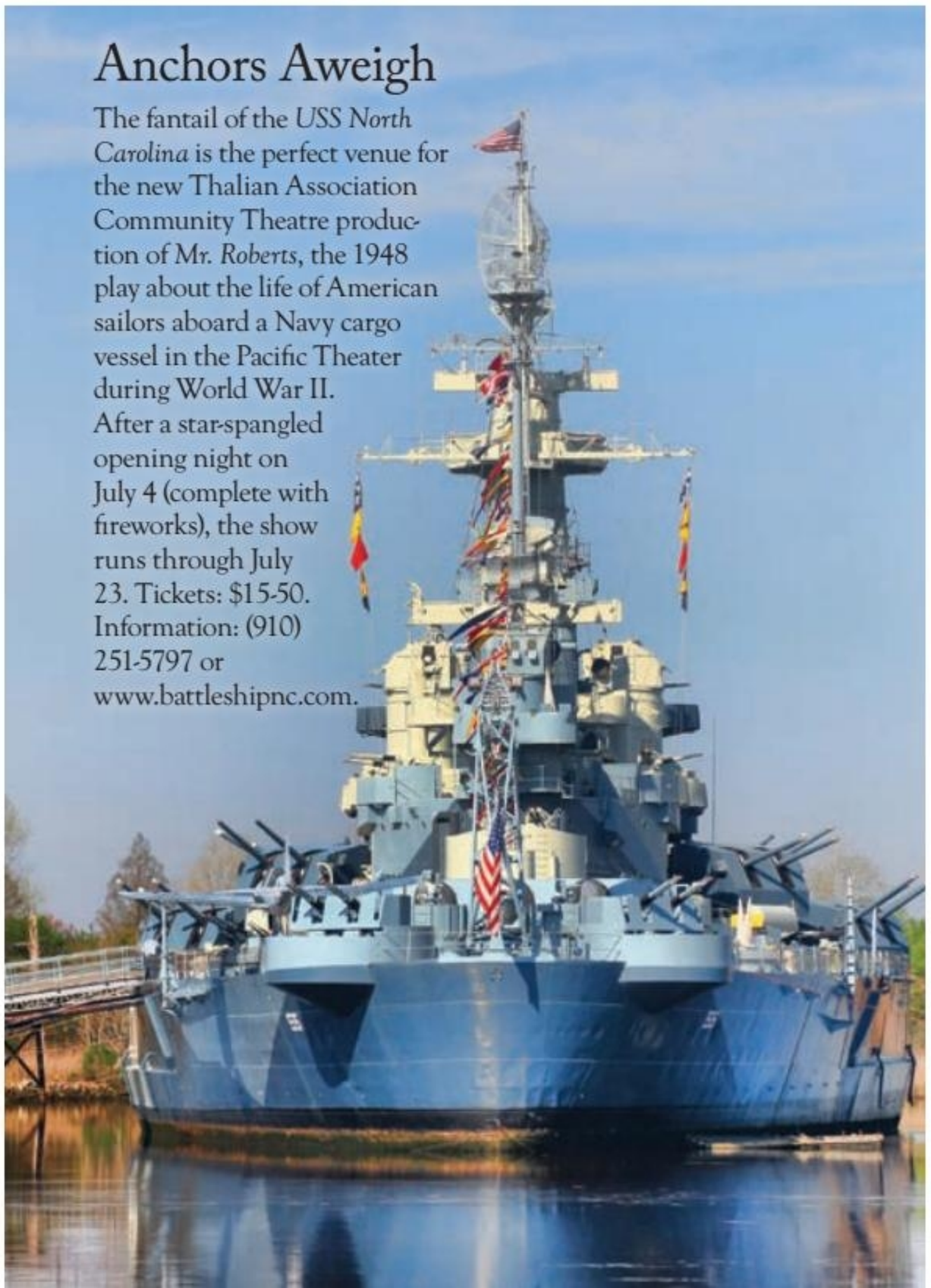
Lumina Festival

The inaugural Lumina Festival of the Arts, a 17-day celebration under the auspices of UNCW's Office of the Arts, will take place from July 14 to 30. This summer arts showcase, which is modeled on Charleston's Spoleto Festival, will feature a variety of film, music,

visual arts and dance performances. Highlights include a Latin dance salsa party, outdoor films from Cucalorus (like quirky and absurd apocalypse comedy *Diani & Devine Meet the Apocalypse)*, a summer poetry jam and a Mozart Jubilee. Various locations. For information and tickets, call (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/arts/lumina.

Anchors Aweigh

The fantail of the *USS North Carolina* is the perfect venue for the new Thalian Association Community Theatre production of *Mr. Roberts*, the 1948 play about the life of American sailors aboard a Navy cargo vessel in the Pacific Theater during World War II. After a star-spangled opening night on July 4 (complete with fireworks), the show runs through July 23. Tickets: $15-50. Information: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.



Summertime Blues

The eighth annual Ocean City Jazz Festival is coming to North Topsail Beach on Saturday and Sunday, July 1 and 2. This year's star-studded lineup includes jazz trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, saxophonist Jackiem Joyner (aka Lil Man Soul), Grammy award-winning trumpeter Randy Brecker, and the John Brown Quartet. A travel package from Raleigh-Durham is available, which includes two-night hotel stay and a wine-tasting lunch at Duplin Winery. Tickets start at $35 for a one-day pass and shuttle service is available to the festival from Wilmington. For more details and tickets: (910) 459-9263 or oceancityjazzfest.com.

The Wickedest Town in the West

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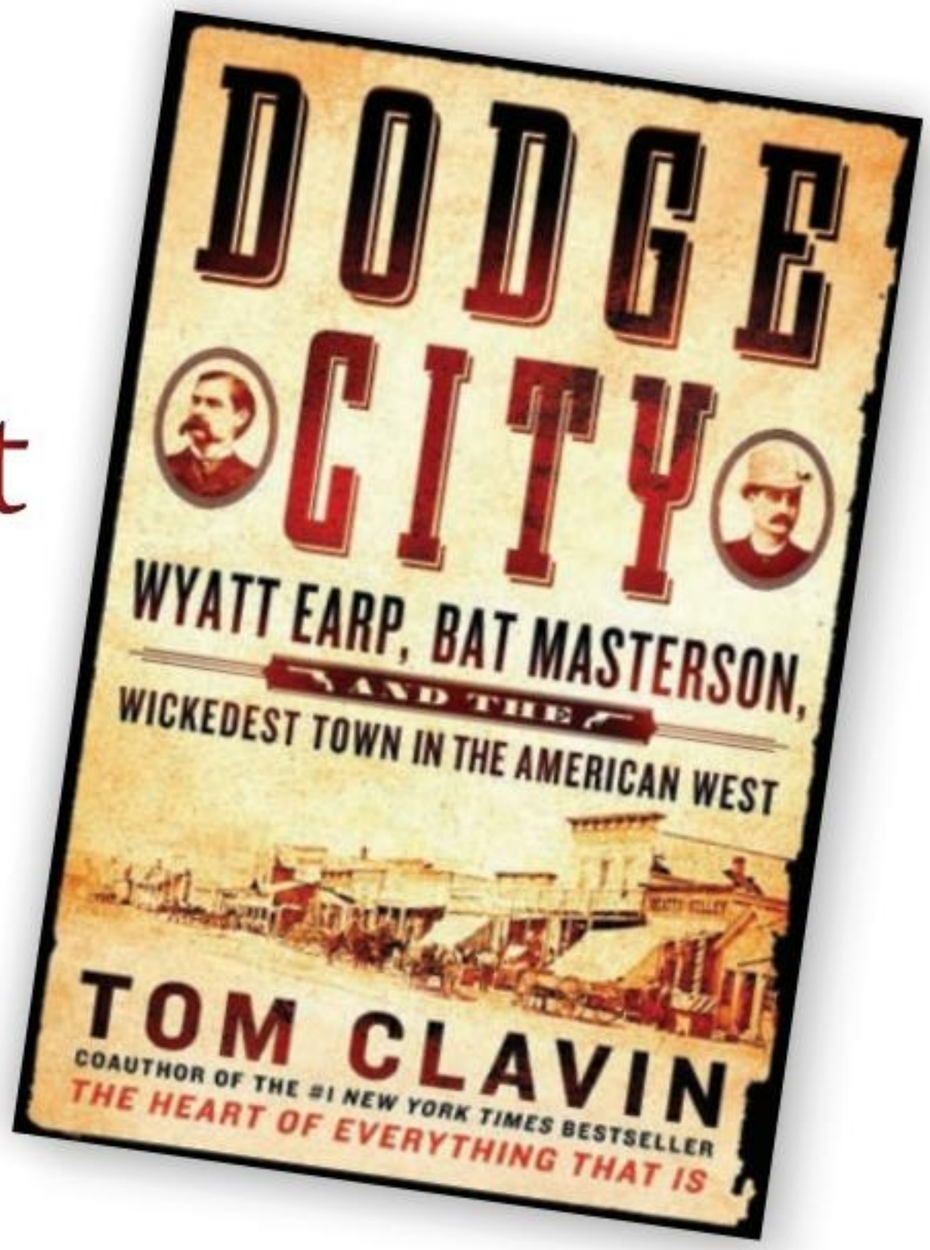
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AND THE
WICKEDEST TOWN IN THE AMERICAN WEST
TOM CLAVIN
COAUTHOR OF THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
THE HEART OF EVERYTHING THAT IS

By Stephen E. Smith

In the mid-1980s, actor Robert Mitchum appeared on a late-night talk show to promote his latest film. The host asked if the movie was worth the price of admission and Mitchum replied: "If it's a hot afternoon, the theater is air conditioned, and you've got nothing else to do, what the hell, buy a ticket."

Readers should adopt a similar attitude toward Tom Clavin's *Dodge City: Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, and the Wickedest Town in the American West*. If you're not doing anything on one of these hot summer afternoons, what the heck, give it a read.

Dodge City is a 20-year history of the Kansas military post turned cow town that has come down in popular culture as the Sodom of the make-believe Wild West. No doubt Dodge had its share of infamous gunfighters, brothels and saloons, including the Long Branch Saloon of *Gunsmoke* fame, and there were myriad minor dustups, but nix the Hollywood hyperbole, and Dodge City's official history is straightforward: Following the Civil War, the Great Western Cattle Trail branched off from the Chisholm Trail and ran smack into Dodge, creating a transitory economic boom. The town grew rapidly in 1883 and 1884 and was a convergence for buffalo hunters and cowboys, and a distribution center for buffalo hides and cattle. But the buffalo were soon gone, and Dodge City had a competitor in the cattle business, the border town of Caldwell. Later cattle drives converged on the railheads at Abilene and Wichita, and by 1890, the cattle business had moved on, and Dodge City's glory days were over.

Clavin focuses on the city's rough-and-tumble years from 1870 through the 1880s, explicating pivotal events through the lives and times of the usual suspects — Bat Masterson, the Earp brothers, Doc Holliday et al. He fleshes out his narrative by including notorious personages not directly linked to Dodge City — Billy the Kid, John Wesley Hardin, Wild Bill Hickok, "Big Nose" Kate, Buffalo Bill Cody, Sitting Bull, the Younger brothers, and a slew of lesser characters such as "Dirty Sock" Jack, "Cold Chuck" Johnny and "Dynamite" Sam, all of whom cross paths much in the manner characters interact in Doctorow's *Ragtime*. Also included are abbreviated histories of Tombstone — will we ever lose our fascination with the 30-second shoot-out at the O.K. Corral? — and Deadwood.

If all of this sounds annoyingly familiar, it is. There's no telling how many Wild West biographies, histories, novels, feature films, TV series, documentaries, etc., have been cranked out in the last 140 years, transforming us all into cowboy junkies. Our brief Western epoch has so permeated world ethea that blue jean-clad dudes in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, might be heard to say, "I'm getting the hell out of Dodge," in Uzbek, of course.

Clavin offers what amounts to a caveat in his Author's Note: ". . . *Dodge City* is an attempt to spin a yarn as entertaining as tales that have been told before but one that is based on the most reliable research. I attempted to follow the example of the Western Writers of America, whose members over the years have found the unique formula of combining strong scholarship with entertaining writing."

So what we have is a hybrid, a quasi-history not quite up to the standards of popular history, integrated into a series of underdeveloped episodic adventure tales that ultimately fail to entertain. If Doris Kearns Goodwin and David McCullough are your historians of choice, you'll find that *Dodge City* falls with a predictable thud. It's simply more of the same Western hokum. The writing isn't exceptional, the research is perfunctory, most of the pivotal events are common knowledge, and the characters are so familiar as to breed contempt.

If you have a liking for yarns by writers such as Louis L'Amour, Luke Short and Larry McMurtry, *Dodge City* isn't going to make your list of favorite Westerns. Without embellishment, the narrative loses its oomph, and the episodic structure diminishes any possibility of a thematic continuity, which is, of course, that the lawlessness that marked Dodge City's formative years is a metaphor for the country as a whole, that violence and corruption are a fundamental component of American life.

On a positive note, readers of every persuasion will likely find the book's final chapter intriguing. Clavin follows his principal characters to the grave. Wyatt, the last surviving Earp brother, ended his days in Los Angeles at the age of 80. Doc Holliday died in Colorado of tuberculosis at 36, his boots off. "Big Nose" Kate, Doc's paramour, lived until 1940 at the Arizona Pioneers' Home, dying at the age of 89.

Of particular interest is Bartholomew William Barclay "Bat" Masterson, Wyatt Earp's dapper buddy in the "lawing" business. Whereas Earp's claim to fame ended with his exploits as a Western peace officer and cow town ruffian, Masterson went on to a life of greater achievement. He became an authority on prizefighting and was in attendance at almost every important match fought during his later years. He was friends with John L. Sullivan, Jack Johnson and Jack Dempsey. In 1902, he moved to New York City and worked as a columnist for the *New York Morning Telegraph*. His columns covered boxing and other sporting events, and he produced op-ed pieces on crime, war, politics, and often wrote of his personal life. He became a close friend of President Theodore Roosevelt and remained a celebrity until his death in 1921.

It promises to be a long, hot, unsettling summer. If you've got nothing better to do, turn off cable news, slap down $29.99 and give *Dodge City* a read. It's little enough to pay for a few hours of blessed escapism.

Stephen E. Smith is a retired professor and the author of seven books of poetry and prose. He's the recipient of the Poetry Northwest Young Poet's Prize, the Zoe Kincaid Brockman Prize for poetry and four North Carolina Press awards.

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BUSINESS NORTH CAROLINA

Revenge of the Lawn

Covet not thy neighbor's grass. Just go hire the right organic lawn care specialist

By Wiley Cash

I'm standing on my lawn in Wilmington, North Carolina, recalling the time I heard a mindfulness teacher condense the many years of the Buddha's teachings into one sentence: Cling to nothing as I, me, or mine. That's good advice, life-making or life-changing advice depending on when you receive it, but it's hard advice to follow in my neighborhood, especially as my gaze drifts from the weed-choked, shriveled brown grass at my feet to the lush, pampered golf course-green of my neighbors' lawns. All around me are weeds I don't understand, things I've never seen before, things I never could have imagined: monstrous tendrils that snake into the air in search of something to strangle; vines covered in thorns and bits of fluff that cling to the skin like the pink fiberglass insulation your dad always warned you not to touch in the attic; scrubby pines no taller than 6 inches with root systems as long as my legs and twice as strong.

Roughly 250 miles west sits the city of Gastonia, where I was raised in a wooded suburb that always felt to me as if the houses in the neighborhood of my youth had been forged from the landscape. In my memory, dense forests loom in our backyard, the smell of wood smoke curls through the air, grass looks like grass: thick blades that grow up toward the sun instead of clumping and crawling like desperate snakes wriggling toward prey.

Another 100 miles west, nestled in the cradle of the Blue Ridge Mountains, is the city of Asheville, where I grew into adulthood and made the decision to become a writer. This meant I worked odd jobs and lived in relative — if not romantic — poverty throughout my 20s. I inhabited a slew of rental houses with friends of similar ages and similar interests, each house having one thing in common: a wild expanse of unkempt lawn where nature grew in a heady, beautiful containment — variegated hostas, blue and pink and purple hydrangeas, English lavender and flame azalea. We didn't water anything or spread fertilizer. The only people who ever cut the grass were the landlords, and that was done sporadically with the weather and season. Yet, it seemed that we could have dug our heels into the black earth and something beautiful would have sprung forth.

Down here on the coast my lawn is nothing but sand with a thin skin of sod draped over it. I live in a region where if you buy plants at the garden store, you'd better buy the soil to plant them in. Nothing but the most tenacious, native weeds can survive in this boggy, sandy soil. Some days I have doubts about my own survival. It too often feels like I don't belong here, but then again, my lawn doesn't belong here either. Just a few months before we moved in, this landscape was marked by piney swamps dotted with ferns, maples and the occasional live oak. Not long ago, bulldozers plowed through and pushed over all but a few of the pines. Then dump trucks flooded the wet spots with tons upon tons of fill dirt. The developer carved out streets, piled the dirt into 1/4 acre squares, and called them lots. The builder began constructing houses. Finally, landscapers rolled out strips of St. Augustine, punched holes in the ground and dropped cheap shrubs into the earth.

My wife and I bought one of the first lots, and there were only a handful of houses in the development when we built ours. We moved in just in time to watch nature attempt to reclaim its domain. We've been here almost four years. Now, the streets bubble where swamp water pulses through cracks in the asphalt. The drainage ponds are full of alligators that behave more like residents than those of us who have built homes. At dusk, tiny bloodthirsty flies, what the locals call "no-see-ums," dance in the night like specters, biting your ears, eyeballs and neck.

And then there are the weeds. The canopy of trees is gone now, and the weeds have ample sunlight and plenty of room to spread.

I lie in bed at night pondering the use of industrial-strength fertilizers and weed killers, and I weigh their environmental destruction and the health risks they pose my children with the possibility of having a lawn of which I can be proud. I begin to empathize with companies responsible for accidental coal-ash spills (Everyone wants electricity!) and incidental pesticide contamination (Everyone wants bananas in January!).

Deciding to forgo potential carcinogens, at least for now, I appeal to someone who seems expert in all things related to lawns and manhood. Tim lives three houses down and has the most perfect yard in the neighborhood. He's tan and tall and lean. He could be 40 or 65, the kind of guy who rides his road bike to the beach each day at dawn with his surfboard strapped to his back, the kind of guy

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who looks like Lance Armstrong or Laird Hamilton, depending on whether he's wearing spandex or board shorts.

I find Tim watering his lawn with a garden hose. The rest of us turn on our irrigation systems and hope for the best. Not Tim; he waters like a surgeon. He's barefoot, and I wonder what it feels like to be able to walk shoeless in one's yard without feeling the sharp crinkling of dead grass blades beneath your feet. I explain my lawn problems to him, at least insofar as I understand them. He listens with patience, perhaps even sympathy.

"Fertilize," he finally says. "Organic. Commercial. Whatever. It doesn't matter. And then wait until it rains." He turns off his garden hose and finds the one weed in his yard that's apparent to the naked eye: a dandelion that looks more like a flower than any flowers I've planted in the past year. Tim reaches down and plucks the dandelion from the earth with the ease of lifting it from a vase. "They come up easier when the ground's wet," he said. "Roots and all."

So, early in the spring, I fertilize the yard with liquid corn gluten meal. The air smells like a combination of popcorn and barnyard, but it seems to have enough nitrogen in it to green up the grass. And, after the next rain, I pull weeds. For hours. It works. By early summer my lawn is green and nearly weed-free, but I never get too comfortable.

I'm out of town one morning when I text my wife and ask for an update on our lawn. I receive a photo reply within a few minutes. I hesitate to open it the way young people hesitate to open report cards, the way old people hesitate to open medical tests: There's nothing I can do about it now, I think. To my surprise the photo my wife sent shows a vibrant green lawn dappled with early morning dew. I can't help but wonder if she's walked up the street and snapped a picture of Tim's grass. Regardless, I allow relief to wash over me: The C- I'd been expecting has become a B, the heart disease diagnosis I knew awaited me has ended up being indigestion. Life can go on as long as it rains — but not too much — and the sun keeps shining, but not on the west side of the lawn because there is no shade there, and if we don't get enough rain the grass will crisp up pretty quick.

Late in the summer the grass begins to turn brown in strange semicircles, and when I look closely I can see the individual blades stirring. I kneel down and spot a tiny worm at work. I look closer, spot hundreds, no, thousands more. Our neighborhood has been invaded by armyworms. Instead of spending my time on the novel that's months overdue, I spend a small fortune coating the grass in organic neem oil. To make myself feel better about not writing I listen to podcasts about writing, but my attempt to stave off writer's guilt is just as futile as my attempt to fight the armyworms. Our green grass is eaten away within a matter of days; my

soul follows suit, and I can only hope both will re-emerge come spring.

But that spring, something else happens instead. In May, my father is diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor, and the lawn and its calendar of fertilizing and hydrating slips from my mind. He passes two short weeks later, and as I ease into grief the summer spins away from me, and I don't even look around until August, when my yard comprises more weeds than grass. I've missed the opportunity to fertilize, and there's no amount of safe weed killer that's going to make a dent.

I wait for it to rain. Then I fall to my knees, and I pick weeds.

My 2-year-old daughter joins me. Sometimes she'll yank up fistfuls of grass because it comes up easier than the weeds. I don't have the heart to correct her, and I can't help but wonder if she's on to something. How long would it take us to tear out all this grass and start over? I look at my neighbors' thriving lawns, and I assume that the pain of death or responsibilities for children or work-related obligations have not touched their lives in the ways they've touched mine. If only my life could be as clear and clean and healthy as their lawns appear to be.

This year, I decide that I don't have the patience, the faith, the head space, or the heart space to battle my lawn, and I call a local company that specializes in organic lawn care. I'm surveying the yard when the technician arrives. His name is Steve, and he's actually the owner, which puts me at ease. He's middle-aged, clean-shaven with glasses and silvery hair. He speaks quietly, confidently. I can't help but think that he senses something about me. Perhaps he knows that I'm embarrassed to admit that I can't do something as simple as grow grass, that I've put too much pressure on myself, that things have gone too far, that I'm clinging to something that does not deserve my clinging.

In my recollection, he puts a hand on my shoulder. Maybe he even takes my hand. He leads me around the yard, whispering the names of the weeds he finds, the ways in which he can stop them. He tells me it's not my fault. It's hard to grow grass in this environment, especially in new neighborhoods like mine where the sod hasn't had time to take root or an existing organic structure to give it life. And my ground is too hard, he says. It needs to be aerated. It needs to be softened.

We agree on a treatment regimen. They'll start next week, provided it doesn't rain.

"You're going to have a beautiful lawn," he says. "You'll be happy."

"I appreciate that," I say. "But it's all yours now."

Wiley Cash lives in Wilmington, North Carolina, with his wife and their two daughters. His forthcoming novel The Last Ballad *is available for pre-order wherever books are sold.*

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On the Waterfront

Thalian Association brings history to life on the USS North Carolina

By Nicholas Gray

When I brought Chandler Davis onboard as managing director of City Stage two years ago, I knew she would be up for great innovations in our local theater community. As creative as she is organized, Chandler was named artistic director of Wilmington's Thalian Association early last summer. And she has now taken the helm as director of their untraditional production of *Mr. Roberts*, by Thomas Heggan and Joshua Logan, which is being staged on the fantail of the historic *USS North Carolina* on the Wilmington riverfront.

Bringing *Mr. Roberts* to life on a battleship is the brainchild of the Thalian Association's executive director, Susan Habas, who intended to create a fundraiser for both the Battleship North Carolina and Thalian's kid-friendly stage TACT, while also fulfilling the association's mission to create innovative performing arts productions in our region.

"We've managed the Hannah Block Historic USO/Community Arts Center since 1994," says Habas. "Our offices are literally in a World War II museum, and honoring the sacrifices and meaning of the war is always on our minds . . . and we are privileged to be partnered with the most decorated battleship of that time." And Terry Bragg, the executive director of Battleship North Carolina, was enthusiastic: "It's a unique way for us to support local theater while highlighting historic Wilmington's scenic waterfront."

And so came the production of *Mr. Roberts*. Driven by the success of the film, which stars Henry Fonda, James Cagney and Jack Lemmon, who won an Academy Award for his role as Ensign Frank Pulver, *Mr. Roberts* is a perfect choice for this mode of theatrical transport – the original play is set on the fantail of a battleship. Based on the 1946 Thomas Heggen novel of the same name, *Mr. Roberts* began as a collection of short stories about Heggen's experiences aboard the cargo ships *USS Virgo* and *USS Rotanin* in the South Pacific during World War II, and though based on our country's wartime history, Davis says the play appeals not only to veterans, but in its comic form, to all. And it will be a theatrical experience unlike any other. As Davis says, "It's not like you're watching a play, it's like you've been dropped onto a ship."

Mr. Roberts runs on the Battleship North Carolina, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington, from July 4 to 23, 2017; Thursdays-Sundays 8 p.m. Tickets $15-$50, with a local resident, youth, senior, group, and military discounts. www.thalian.org or www.battleshipnc.com; see special rates for July 4th performance.

Nicholas Gray is the former artistic director of City Stage Co.

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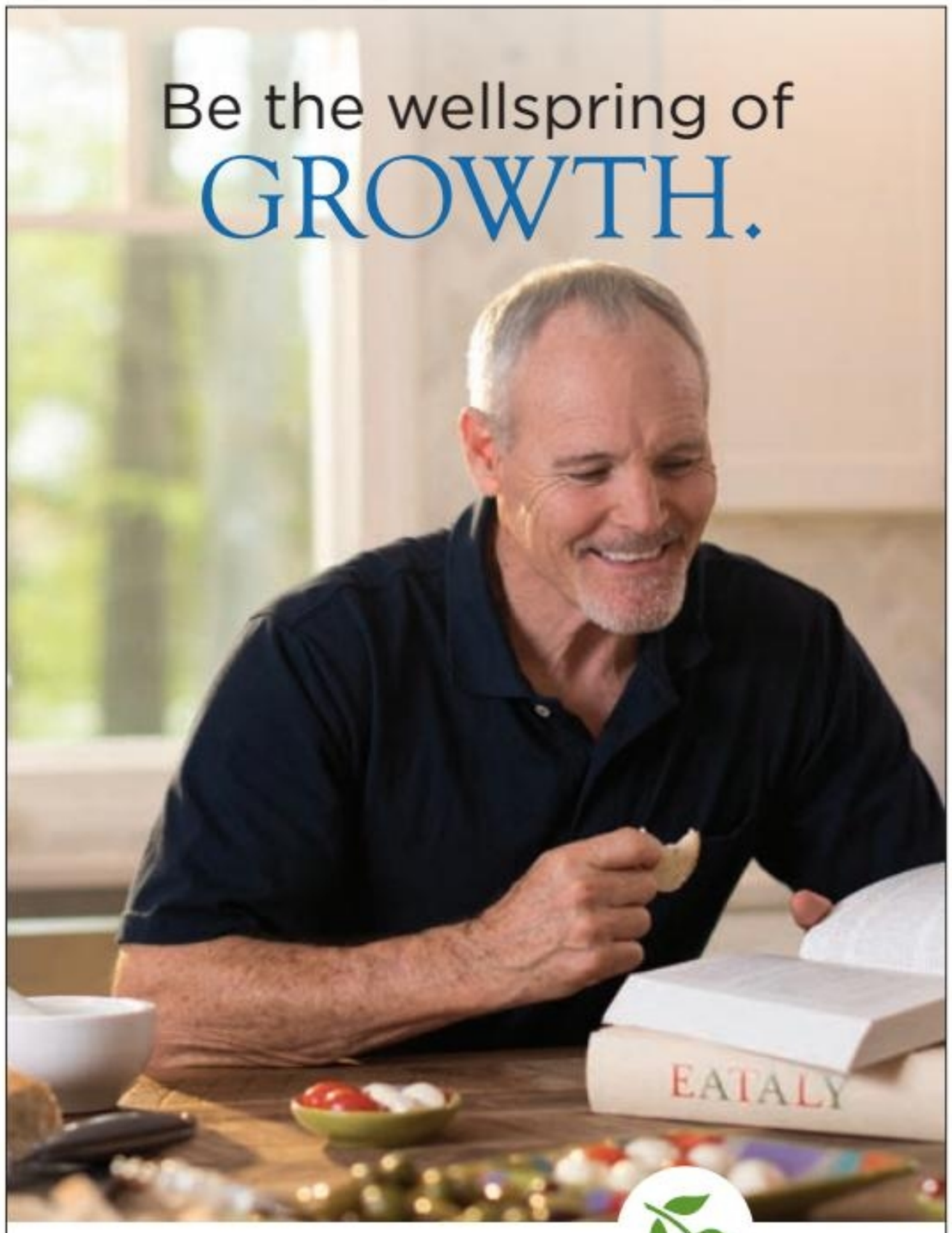

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Cucalorus Cool

After 16 years as the head of Wilmington's acclaimed film festival, Dan Brawley knows the people who make the movies are the real stars of the show

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW SHERMAN

By Dana Sachs

Every year, Dan Brawley, executive director of Wilmington's Cucalorus Film Festival, travels to film events all over the world, and he often notices something interesting. At the biggest, most glamorous festivals, he'll see crowds surrounding movie stars and then a group of "weird, shy-looking people huddled together in the corner."

"Who are they?" I ask. Dan and I have met for lunch at Beer Barrio downtown, and his description makes me curious.

Dan, a Wilmington native, has a gentle drawl and a gentlemanly manner, which make his vexation sound even more surprising. "Those are the filmmakers," he says.

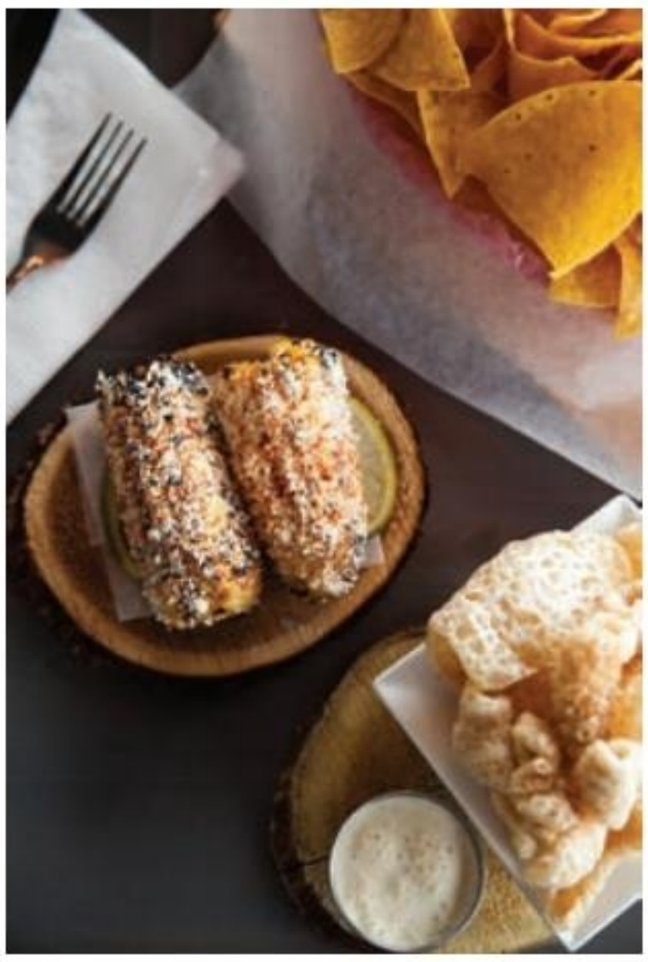
We're laughing but, in the larger sense, Dan is completely serious. Over 16 years as head of Cucalorus, and now as the newly elected president of the international Film Festival Alliance, he's trying to draw filmmakers out of the corners and into the film festival spotlight. Too much concentration on the "red carpet spectacle," he tells me, puts festivals at risk of alienating their most important asset — the people who make the movies. At Cucalorus, filmmakers receive free passes for every event. Dan tells them, "You're the most important person here."

On the surface, it may seem counterproductive to focus on filmmakers over actors. Big-name movie stars attract crowds; crowds buy tickets; ticket sales keep nonprofit festivals afloat. "We could have gotten Sandra Bullock to show up at a screening," Dan says. "That would have made sense financially." But focusing on the glamour would have demanded a trade-off that Dan isn't willing to make. "If Sandra Bullock is sitting over there," he says, pointing to the center of the restaurant, "all the energy in the room would emanate from her body."

Dan, instead, wants a film festival's energy to emanate from what's happening among all the attendees. Here in Wilmington, for example, he calls Cucalorus "an institute for innovation and learning." That means more than simply showing movies. It means creating a "temporary film community" in downtown Wilmington. Here, he tells me, "You've got filmmakers from Spain coming to the United States for the first time and they're meeting filmmakers from Shallotte and that creates a bond." As these people come together, they see each other's films. They talk, dance, hang out at the Barbary Coast over beers. Time together inspires them creatively. Then they take that inspiration home with them and make more films.

Wilmington, with its long history of moviemaking, is a natural location for fostering such creativity. Local industry professionals, for example, flock to Cucalorus screenings. Post-screening Q&As become lively dialogues. "Someone might stand up and say, 'You just did a 30-minute film as a single take and there are underwater shots! How did you do that?'" If you're a visiting filmmaker, Dan says, you'll appreciate an audience that "understands your brilliance."

Cucalorus got its start in 1994 as a grass-roots collective of artists and filmmakers. That year, the festival screened 16 films. Last year, it screened 306 films



and had an accumulated audience of 18,000 attending not only film presentations but also dance performances, panels, workshops and social events. The festival welcomed visitors from 23 states and 22 countries. These days, some 6,000 festivals operate internationally. Cucalorus is one of the oldest and consistently ranks among the best. *MovieMaker* magazine has named Cucalorus among the "25 Coolest Film Festivals in the World" three times and among the "50 Film Festivals Worth the Entry Fee" six times.

Every November, as festival-goers spread out across downtown, Dan, with a handlebar mustache and a memorable head of zingy blond hair, often stops for tacos (and margaritas) at Beer Barrio, whose location at the corner of Princess and Front puts it near the center of the action. Today, for lunch, the two of us start with a couple of street-food appetizers. The elote, or Mexican grilled corn, is slathered in cheese, mayo and spices, and a squeeze of lime turns it into a tart and peppery indulgence. "Who thought an ear of corn could be that interesting?" Dan asks. The chicharones, which are deep-fried pork rinds, have a satisfying crunch and unexpected depth of flavor.

"I thought they'd be nasty," Dan says, "but they're nice. . . . I'm not going to regret this like I would the funnel cake at the fair."

Beer Barrio is known for its tacos. We try the Smoky Black Bean Taco, which offers the best of both worlds — a soft (and manageable) corn tortilla wrapped around a crunchy hard corn shell. "I feel like I can really taste the guacamole," Dan says after trying a bite. "Sometimes, when (a restaurant) just squirts it in, it gets lost." He's even more enthusiastic about the Tequila Grilled Chicken Bowl, a salad-like concoction of highly flavored fresh ingredients. "You can get your fiber," Dan says, then adds, "Their black beans are rockin'."

After he graduated from Duke in 1996, Dan worked as an artist and filmmaker himself. These days, he says, "Cucalorus is my art," not just because it takes vision to build a successful festival, but because good film programming

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grated cheese (optional)

DIRECTIONS:
Combine flour, baking powder and salt. Cut in shortening and add milk. Turn dough out onto floured surface. Roll dough into 18□ x 12□ rectangle. Spread uncooked sausage over dough. Spread grated cheese on top of sausage. Roll dough into jelly-roll fashion starting with the longest side. Cover and refrigerate one hour. Slice dough into 1/4 inch slices. Back at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Makes 3 1/2 dozen.

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demands creativity. For many years, Dan says, he organized the festival's shorts programs. He was so focused on creating intriguing combinations of films that he often rearranged his programs up until the last second, even with the audience seated in the theater and waiting for the show to start. The excitement of screening movies under those kinds of conditions made him braver about taking risks, and the experience helped form his philosophy about the festival. "I always want this to be a place where we can fail together,"

he says. "That's how you're challenging yourself — and your audience."

Over the years, that philosophy has continually evolved. Dan remains emphatic about valuing filmmakers and the need to take risks, but he now also focuses on expanding the festival's reach so that it inspires even more people. Attending Cucalorus, he tells me, acts as "a creative lift . . . . Your expectations of what you can do rise up a little."

As the festival grows and attracts more attention, it may end up attracting famous faces, too. Dan welcomes everyone, but to the movie stars he offers a caveat.

"If Sandra Bullock wants to come to our festival," he says, "she'll have to buy a pass."

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The Cake Lady's Best

By Jim Dodson

Before our second official date two decades ago, my wife-to-be Wendy put me to work boxing up wedding cakes.

Please note that I said "cakes." For there were more than 100 of them — perfect little wedding cakes meant for two, gorgeously decorated confections created for a Bridezilla who believed all guests deserved their own personal wedding cake.

"She saw it in a magazine and went to all the local bakeries but nobody wanted to take on the job," Wendy explained with a laugh as we set about carefully boxing up the baby bridal cakes. Once they were packaged, they were ferried into the kitchen by various neighbors in her cul-du-sac in Syracuse, N.Y., who'd graciously offered their refrigerators for storing the miniature works of art.

Following the delivery, she even rewarded me for my assistance with a cake that didn't make the final cut. It was spectacularly good, some kind of buttery white cake with a raspberry filling. The bride, for the record, was over the moon with the diminutive delicacies.

Over dinner later that night, I asked Wendy how she had developed her cake-making chops. She explained that she'd always been the natural baker in her family of three daughters, but really found her footing when Karen, her middle sister (Wendy is the eldest) needed a wedding cake. Wendy offered to make it, expertly copying an elaborate cake from Martha Stewart's 1995 bible on nuptials, *Weddings*.

The cake apparently was a big hit and word quickly circulated. Within a relatively short time Wendy had developed a cottage industry she called The Cake Lady and saw a steady stream of folks

wanting cakes for all occasions showing up on her suburban Syracuse doorstep. By then she had deepened her considerable knowledge of cake-making by taking an advanced course in the craft and by devouring every classic and modern book she could find on the subject of making cakes.

One afternoon not long after my serious courtship of her commenced, I breezed into her kitchen and saw a large wicker basket filled with fresh-popped popcorn sitting on her kitchen counter. I blithely grabbed a handful of it, discovering, to my horror and embarrassment, that I was holding a gooey glob of icing. The cake was actually a groom's cake, meant for a fellow whose favorite snack food was popcorn.

I was caught literally licking my fingers — the icing was excellent — when my own unflappable girlfriend entered the kitchen, took one look at my boneheaded gaffe, laughed it off and got to work repairing the damage. Soon that basket of "popcorn" was as good as new — and I knew without question this gal was the one for me.

Two years later, she made our own stunning wedding cake crowned by a bouquet of beautiful summer flowers for the rowdy lobster bake and reception we threw under a harvest moon on our forested hilltop in Maine. A crowd of 100 was expected. A crowd at least half again that size showed up.

The cake was gone within minutes after we cut the first piece, which I never even got a taste of (only the remnant cake tops saved in the refrigerator), an indication not only of how beautiful Wendy's cakes typically are but — far more important in her view — how delicious.

Over the next decade, as the schoolteacher, wife and part-time baker made cakes for every sort of occasion for friends, co-workers and relatives — rarely charging anything save for major wedding cakes — I was often pressed into service as the cake delivery man and general factotum.

There were some memorable near disasters — like the three-pedestal all-butter cream wedding cake some mad bride in love with the fountains of Versailles ordered for the hottest summer day in Maine. As it sat in an unair-conditioned alumni house on the Bowdoin College campus, there was an interminable delay during which the butter cream began to melt and the entire back of the cake ran downhill. I received a remarkably calm telephone call from Wendy asking me to bring several of our children's wood alphabet blocks, a screwdriver and some shims to the alumni house. By the time I got there, she'd managed to somehow recreate the back of the cake and soon stabilized the pedestals with the aforementioned blocks. Talk about grace under fire — or heat wave, as it were.

Then there was the wedding party where, moments after we delivered the cake, the groom's auntie slapped the bride's mother and all hell broke loose — almost taking Wendy's beautiful cake with it.

After that, Wendy more or less hung up her wedding cake apron and concentrated simply on making outstanding cakes for friends and family. In our household, the joke is that mama's cake tops — the portion sliced off the top of a baked cake to allow a flatter surface for decorating — are works of art in and of themselves and never fail to disappear to the last crumb.

Requests for her cakes always seem to surge at the holidays and in summer, when friends are going away and need something special for family dinners.

These two summer standouts are my favorites: a spectacular coconut cake and a strawberry-whipped cream cake that never fails to set picky brides aswoon.

Like all gifted bakers, the former Cake Lady is happy to share her favorite recipes — especially since her husband no longer has to worry about delivering them.

Coconut Cake

Icing:

6 cups confectioners' sugar
6 sticks (1/2 cup each) of unsalted butter
1 tablespoon vanilla
1/4 cup coconut milk

Combine all ingredients in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat on high for 10 minutes.

Cake:

2/3 cups of unsalted butter
2 1/2 cups of sifted cake flour
1 2/3 cups of sugar
1 teaspoon salt
3 1/2 teaspoons of baking powder
3/4 cups milk
1/2 cup coconut milk
3 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
One large bag of unsweetened, grated coconut

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Lightly butter and flour the bottom and sides of two 9-inch cake pans (or use Baker's Joy spray).

In the bowl of an electric mixer, combine the flour, sugar, salt and baking powder. Mix for 30 seconds.

Add the remaining butter and 1/4 cup milk and coconut milk and start beating. While beating, add another 1/2 cup milk.

Add eggs, the remaining 1/2 cup milk and vanilla. Beat 2 minutes longer. Pour equal amounts into each pan and bake 35 to 40 minutes.

Let pans stand for 5 minutes and then remove cakes to cooling racks.

To Assemble:

Set one layer on a cardboard round. Spread one cup of icing on the top of the first layer and generously sprinkle grated unsweetened coconut on top. Place second layer on top and ice the top and sides with the coconut icing. Sprinkle coconut on top and sides of cake, pressing coconut into sides as you go. Serve!

Whipped Cream Strawberry Cake

Icing:

6 cups confectioners' sugar
6 sticks (1/2 cup each) of unsalted butter
1 tablespoon vanilla
1/4 cup heavy cream

Combine all ingredients in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat on high for 10 minutes.
Remove 1 1/2 cups of icing and beat in 1/3 cup of strawberry purée (recipe below)
Strawberry purée:
2 cups fresh or frozen strawberries (if using frozen store-bought strawberries, use unsweetened)
1 teaspoon sugar

Combine and purée in the bowl of a food processor.

Cake:

2 cups sifted cake flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 teaspoons baking powder
3 egg whites
1 cup (1/2 pint) heavy cream
1 1/2 cups sugar
1/2 cup cold water
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly butter and flour the bottom and sides of two 8-inch cake pans (or use Baker's Joy spray).

Sift the flour, salt and baking powder together three times and set aside. Beat the egg whites until stiff but not dry. Whip cream until stiff and fold into eggs. Add sugar gradually and mix well, folding in with a rubber spatula. Add dry ingredients alternately with water in small amounts, beginning and ending with the flour mixture. Blend well. Pour equal amounts into the pans and bake until the center is set, about 30–40 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes and then remove to cooling racks.

To Assemble:

Spread the strawberry icing in the middle. Top with second layer and cover the entire cake with the vanilla frosting. Add decorative borders on top and bottom. Fill in top with fresh strawberries. Serve with additional strawberry purée on side.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK WAGONER

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The Art of Looking Killer

A Yankee transplant gets a Southern decorating lesson

By Caroline Hamilton Langerman

There are a lot of stigmas about people from New York City, but my most glaring deficiency, when I quit the city to be near family in North Carolina, was in the homemaking department.

I was ignorant of fire hazards such as lint filters and coffee makers. I couldn't name a flower, differentiate wood furniture from plastic, or cook a frozen pizza without calling my mom to panic about little embers of burning cheese. My last encounter with paint had been in a high school ceramics class. Or was that glaze? Plants were something I visited in other boroughs.

So, picture me arriving with my husband and small son to my dream house in the heart of Myers Park, Charlotte. "Dream" is an accurate descriptor here because the content is blurry: I like the house, but I'm not totally sure why. It's both charming and imperfect, but I can't itemize its charms or quirks. Built in the 1920s and set atop a little hill on a tree-lined street, the house looks "cottage-like" to me.

"The little white Tudor?" asks my cousin who lives in the neighborhood.

"Exactly!" I exclaim, pretending to have understood the history of its friendly gables, shingled roof, and half-timber framing.

Week one in the South feels like a prison break: I drink coffee on the blue slate front porch, eat peanut butter crackers in the backyard surrounded by limelight hydrangeas, and push my stroller down the driveway humming "Dixie-Land Delight." It thrills me — and bothers my husband — that friends call the house "cute."

There is only one problem. It's empty.

"I have a friend, McKenzie, who is just starting out decorating," the Realtor says. "She doesn't yet charge by the hour." By the hour? How long could it take to suggest furnishings for a cottage?

If there were a Venn diagram of my decorating appetite, I am smack in the bulls-eye between desperate and indifferent. I gaze upon a reasonably attractive glass coffee table I'd procured on consignment and decide not to call McKenzie. Five minutes later, my eyes fall on the musty drapes, and I dial her 704 number like it's 911.

McKenzie is a buttercup. She shows up dressed in shades of pink that in New York I had only encountered on the tulips in Central Park. Her blonde hair shines; my being brunette suddenly feels like a bad decorating choice.

"Come in," I say, opening the door of my adorable house to reveal its naked interior. Inviting her in gives me a flashback to letting my husband see me without makeup for the first time. As she accepts a glass of tap water and sits on my used-to-be-white sofa, I reassure myself with the fact that he did marry me, beady eyes and all.

McKenzie lays an arm on the old sofa sleeve, puts her water down on my mom's (handsome or horrible?) antique end table, and politely asks, "So, Caroline, what's your style?"

When I don't answer immediately, she prods gently: Am I traditional, or contemporary? Do I like patterns or solids? What color schemes am I envisioning?

I look back cheerfully, as if fibbing on an important exam, and offer this safe non-sequitur: "I admire Kate Middleton," followed by some rambling about wanting to "fit in Charlotte" but "not be trendy."

Luckily, McKenzie has vision.

"Let's start to bring the outside in, Caroline, with some chartreuse throw pillows."

Over the course of a few weeks, she adds a skirt to my mother's old parlor sofa. She brings in a pinewood console to temper my husband's 55-inch TV. She all but bullies me into recovering a pair of wingback chairs in a bold blue stripe. "In my opinion, Caroline," (she says my name in an accent that makes me feel like a bona fide Steel Magnolia) "these will look *killer*."

Little by little, this old house gets new life. I feel my newfound enthusiasm for decor rise through the shingled roof. Along with it, my budget. My husband, an investor who regularly uses Excel to build complicated financial models, is Ping-Ponging a spreadsheet of expenses back and forth with me via email. He teaches me a two-fingered shortcut to "insert row" — an action I take every time McKenzie suggests something that a Southern Lady should have.

Around this time, my mother starts noting that it "must be nice." "Rome wasn't built in a day," she says, padding through the kitchen and wrapping up some leftovers.

My millennial-shame stings for about two seconds. Then I remind myself that during the decade when I could have been chipping reasonably away at Rome, I had been living in windowless basements or fifth-floor walk-ups, sleeping in bedrooms that fit *only* my twin bed. I may be playing Scarlett O'Hara in my new house, but haven't I at least *kind of* earned it?

Still. My blessings — a Southernism that I swore I'd never adapt — are many. I hold the baby to his nursery window and show him the North Carolina state tree blooming in the front yard. "You're so lucky," I tell him with a squeeze. "A pink dogwood!"

He looks back at me cheerfully and says, "Woof!"

In spring's fullest bloom, neighbors drop off biscuits and offer their teenagers as babysitters. Cats come stalking around our grill at twilight and rub our bare legs (shorts in April!). Our road has a family Easter egg hunt. Two ladies in tennis skirts ring the doorbell one morning to introduce themselves as co-captains of a Neighborhood Watch Patrol. One of them is "still rather loopy" from a varicose vein removal procedure that morning. Southern hospitality is alive and well.

"So, have you met many new friends?" shouts my best friend over the din of Manhattan traffic.

"Oh, yes. Everyone's so nice!" I begin to describe McKenzie and her pinafore-wearing toddler who plays with mine. But halfway through telling the inside joke McKenzie and I have about the double meaning of "green stools," I pause, remembering her invoice on my kitchen counter. I know I'm paying her, but we're friends now, aren't we?

One month before my housewarming party, McKenzie shows up with sheer curtain samples for the kitchen, and some big news.

"I'm moving," she says.

"Oh, great!" I start to anticipate which of Charlotte's popular neighborhoods will be her new home.

"To Germany," she apologizes. I have to catch my breath. Apparently, her husband has taken a promotion there. She will of course give me the numbers for her handyman and seamstress so I can call them directly.

"That's wonderful," I say, so disappointed I could crumble. It's not just that I will have to navigate interior decorating alone. It's that no one will ring my doorbell each Tuesday with a big smile, a bag full of fabric swatches, and advice on how to get accepted to the best church preschool.

Nevertheless, there's a debut to plan. McKenzie goes into overdrive: Curtains are hung, art is installed, and carpets are rolled out.

"Go to Campbell's Nursery," she commands, "and buy yourself a white orchid plant in the $60 range. Put it in a cream-colored pot in your living room." I drive directly to the nursery, then continue to Harris Teeter in search of sweet tea that isn't too sweet for my grandmother.

The next morning, there is a huge bouquet of blue hydrangeas on my front porch. "A batch from my backyard!" the text from McKenzie reads. "Have a fabulous time!"

I look at the vase — clear glass with little glass polka dots — and smile. I imagine McKenzie's sink water bubbling into the vase, her scissors snipping down the tallest stems, her minivan — off the clock — delivering them to my door. Around here, if you're wondering if someone's your friend? They are.

A few weeks after the party, I email her. "You were right. The wingbacks *are* killer."

Caroline Hamilton Langerman has published in The New York Times, Elle, Town & Country, Southern Living *and more. She hails from an old Concord family.*

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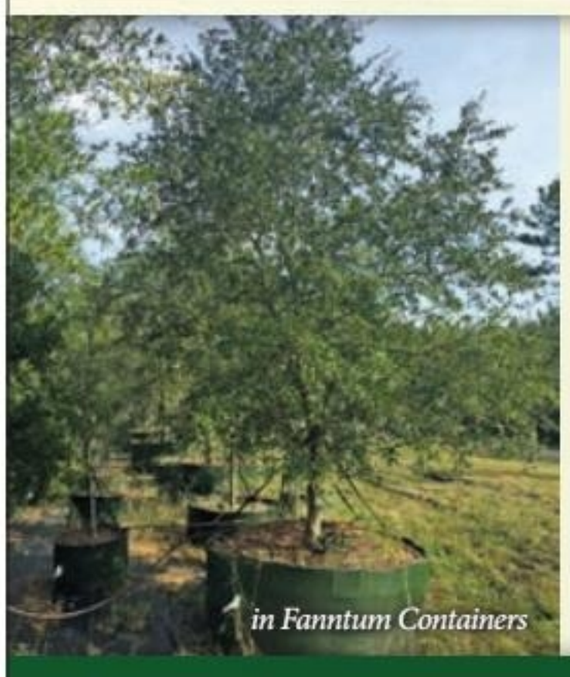
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The Meanest Team on Land and Sea

In 1996, one Ultimate Frisbee team became National champs of nastiness: Wilmington's Port City Slickers

By David Gessner

During my 17 years playing Ultimate Frisbee, I watched the sport change. I was one of the early players — the men in the leather helmets — and when I started in the '70s many of the pot-smoking, hippie stereotypes of Ultimate players were true. The partying continued in the '80s and '90s, but something decidedly less groovy began to emerge with teams caring less about "flow" than about points, and winning Nationals became the quest that drove us for years.

I played for the Hostages in Boston and our chief rival was New York, New York, and it was that New York team that most clearly embodied the change in the sport. Not only did they train all year, but they were ruthless with themselves and other teams. Ultimate has always been self-officiated with no referees, but something called "The Spirit of the Game" — a lofty concept that insists that players make their own calls — is actually written into the rules. The New York players, who rarely showered and practiced on rock-hard fields at night in the city, sneered at the idea of Spirit and, many thought, took advantage of it.

I had dozens of hard battles with that team but eventually moved out to the softer world of Boulder, Colorado. I was struck by how nice everyone was in Colorado. There was always a kind of cruelty to the Eastern teams, a certain junior high school meanness. Sure, we still gave each other crap in Boulder, but it was such gentle crap.

There was really only one game in which I saw my unflappable Boulder teammates — the Stains — lose it. It was 1996, my final year of playing, and Boulder made it to the National Championships in Texas. Our first game at Nationals was during a rainstorm and we slopped our way around the field, battling a team I had never heard of called the Port City Slickers."What the hell is the Port City?" I heard one of my fellow Stains say. I had no idea, but I did know that I had never seen a meaner group of Ultimate players, which was saying something, since I had played against New York in their nasty prime. I remember screaming matches and pushing and a game just this side of a brawl. I also remember that the Port City Slickers beat us by a point.

But maybe what is more interesting was what I didn't know at the time. I didn't know that the Port City was a place called Wilmington, North Carolina. I didn't know that many of the players were from a university I had never heard of and that that team had won the college National Championships three years before. And I sure as hell didn't know that later I would end up living in Wilmington and teaching at UNCW for going on 14 years.

Another thing I didn't know, but perhaps could have guessed, was that the old New York team was the inspiration for the Port City Slickers and for Wilmington teams, in general. In fact, it was in the Port City — not the Big Apple — that Ultimate traveled the furthest it ever would from its pacifist hippie roots. Carolina teams seemed to find the Spirit of the Game unctuous and hypocritical, a tired old concept they had no use for except to work for their own advantage. The old hippie world was long gone. The Slickers spiked discs when they scored, got in the faces of other players and weren't afraid to get physical. At the college National Semifinals in 1995, the UNCW team, the Seamen, got into a brawl with the East Carolina team, the Irates, and, according to the official history of Ultimate, "Police used bullhorns to break up the melee."

But there was an even deeper level to what I didn't know.

Later, I would meet James Tully Beatty, who both played for the Seamen and had graduated from the graduate creative writing program where I would eventually teach. Tully, soft spoken, a good sport and a great player, put the lie to the image of the cheatin' brawlin' boys from Carolina. He was part of the 1990 UNCW team that came out of nowhere at College Nationals to shock two-time-defending-and-soon-to-be three-peat champion UC Santa Barbara in pool play 15-10.

"Heads turned after that," Tully told me. "If you were on the outside looking in at a map, trying to find Wilmington, it was out of nowhere. The closest college Ultimate team to UNCW of any recent relevance was nearly 500 miles away in Philadelphia and nearly 600 miles away in Pittsburgh."

By 1993, UNCW had bagged two second place finishes, one third place tie, and one National title — all in the first six years of the team's existence (it was founded in 1988). East Carolina added two more college titles in 1994 and 1995, with UNCW taking third place that year. Meanwhile the UNCW women's team, Seaweed, won in 1992 and 1996. Ultimate in North Carolina east of I-95 had exploded.

"Other teams resented our success," Tully says. "They thought we were hayseeds and simple hicks. At one tournament outside D.C. in 1994, an older player on a Baltimore team gave us the dueling banjos from *Deliverance* each time they scored."

Rather than reject the stereotype, they relished it. They smoked cigarettes

PHOTOGRAPH BY GRADY WHITE

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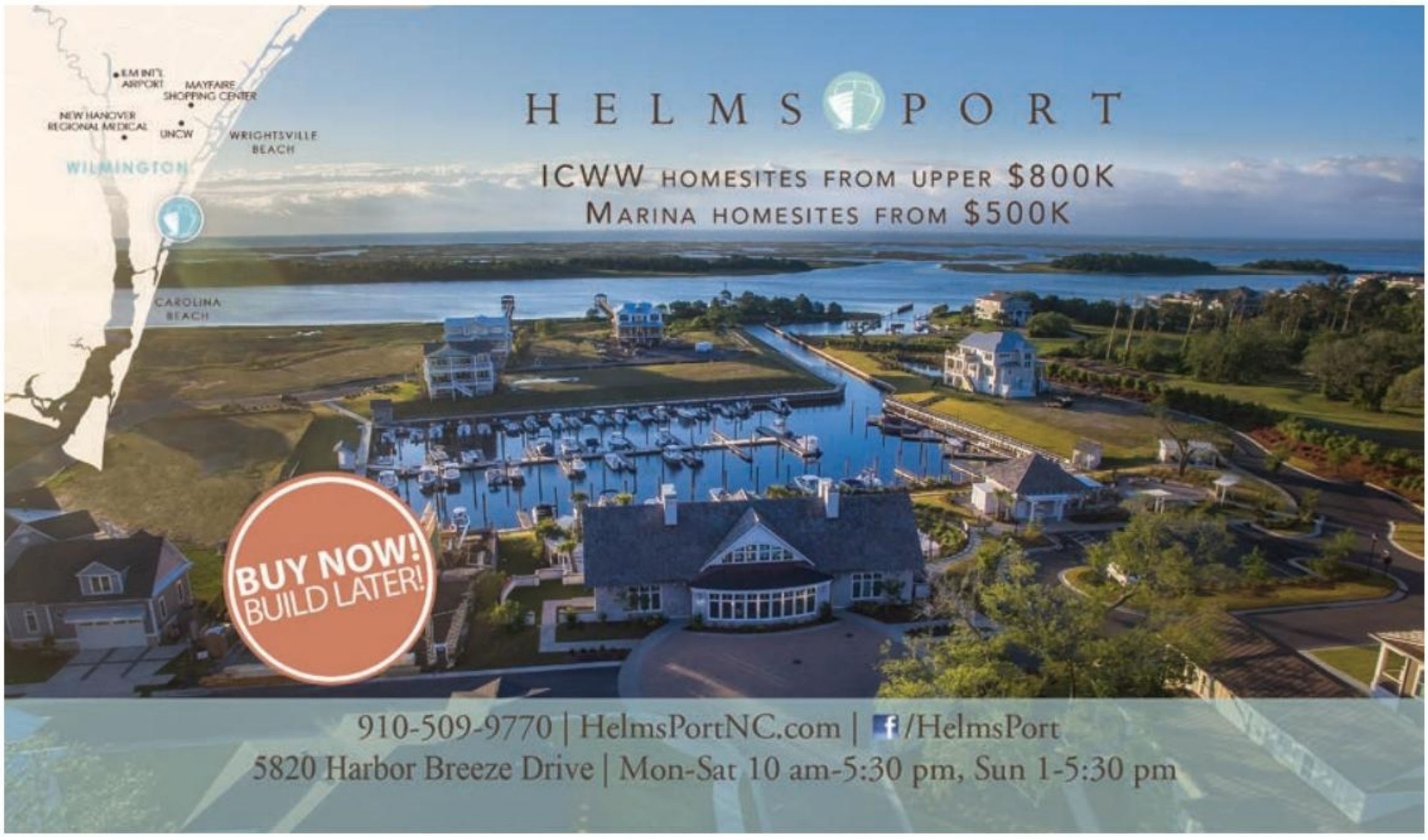
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and drank beers and got in people's faces and never backed down. They kicked butt and won titles. Those were the true glory days of eastern Carolina Ultimate.

But the success they found in college did not translate to the club teams, the closest thing the sport had, back then, to pro teams. The Port City Slickers were a club team made up of both ECU and UNCW graduates, but while they brought the same attitude, they did not have the same success. And so, after falling short of the semis at Nationals in 1995, they came into Nationals in 1996 ready to implode. Which was when I made their acquaintances. My Boulder teammates have neither forgotten nor forgiven. One recently remembered that after our ugly game a couple of Port City players brought over a Frisbee to us as what we thought was a gift and peace offering. When we took it they started cackling and told us that they had spit on both sides of the disc.

"Our flameout was not unlike a band that goes out just as fast as it went up," says Tully now.

As it turned out, Boulder was the only team Port City beat at Nationals that year and as bad as they behaved against us, it was just the beginning. In their last game of the first day, they spit — not on a disc — but on an opposing player.

It wasn't until six years after that Nationals that I first set foot in Wilmington. I still knew nothing about the city before I took my job as a creative writing professor here. I didn't know that it was the home of the only coup in American history in 1898 or about the race riots of the '60s, and I didn't know that the town — in its one great environmental stroke — put aside the land on Masonboro Island which would become my refuge. In truth, the only historical fact I knew about my new city was one few others knew, that it was home to the Ultimate Frisbee equivalent of the Detroit Pistons Bad Boys, the meanest team in the land.

The current Wilmington teams are nothing like the Slickers, but the taint of those early days still lingers. Just this year, a good-spirited UNCW team made it to the finals of college Nationals. Overall, the sport of Ultimate has mellowed out. This is partly because the game has become more civilized, cleaner, more professional. But it is also because of iPhone cameras and, more recently, the cameras of ESPN. It turns out that if you have to see yourself behave like an asshole on film you are less likely to do so.

Which means that not only were the Port City Slickers the meanest, and some would say dirtiest, team of all time, it is also a title we will likely never relinquish.

David Gessner is the author of 10 books, most recently Ultimate Glory: Frisbee, Obsession, and My Wild Youth. *He is the chair of the Creative Writing Department at UNCW, where he also founded the journal* Ecotone.

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Memories of Steel

How a vintage car brought tears to my eyes – and my father back

By Jason Mott

She wanted to cry when I said those painful three words: "I'll take it."

Maybe she never thought I'd actually buy it, or maybe she always knew I would and, sometimes, knowing does nothing to lessen the hurt. "Really?" she asked, her voice quivering just a little. "You're really going to buy it?" I understood the look I saw in her eyes. It was that familiar mixture of surprise and horror, like screaming at a snow-covered mountain only to discover what a part of you has always suspected: that your voice, as small and familiar as it has always been, does have the power to cause an avalanche.

Selling the 1966 Mustang she'd had since she was 16 . . . this was Ramsey's avalanche.

It was mid-March when I was bitten by the classic car bug. I was driving down Carolina Beach Road and saw a black 1970 Mustang for sale. I pulled over and checked it out, only to find that it had lived a rough life and wasn't a car I wanted to buy. But seeing those old American curves and lines was enough to plant the idea of owning one in my head. So I contacted a few friends and asked if anyone had an old Mustang for sale. Turns out a friend from college named Ramsey had one and, now that she'd started a family, needed the garage space. So I went over one afternoon, looked the car over, and bought it, much to Ramsey's disbelief.

That particular flavor of disbelief? I know it well.

When I was a kid my father owned a 1967 Chevelle. It's probably what you picture in your head when you think of classic American muscle cars. It was a glorious car, painted the deepest, richest, bluest blue anyone has ever seen. When my father turned the ignition, it sounded like some monster clawing its way to life. I can remember almost everything about that car: the wide wheels, the heat of the vinyl seats in summer, the sound and feeling of the wind pouring in through the open windows as the sun shined down on empty back roads as my father listened to Marvin Gaye on his 8-track and sang along in that deep baritone voice of his that I always hoped I would grow into some day. He loved to drive. And I loved to ride with him.

Those were the salad days of my youth. But salad days never last.

By the time I was a teenager my father's prized car had become nothing more than a rusted-out lawn ornament. I can't remember what the issue was that caused him to park it in the first place, but whatever it was proved terminal. Over the next 10 years I watched that car fall apart and be consumed by wind, rain and rust. My father always said he'd fix it one day, but that day never came. Eventually, I took up my father's oath and promised to fix it "one day." But that day never came either.

Eventually, my father's Chevelle became an empire of irrevocable ruin. Flat tires, broken windows, rusted-out floor, rats living in the air conditioning vents. In the end, I sold that car to a stranger who came calling one day. He was a junk man who wanted the car for scrap. I hadn't planned on selling it, but then, all of a sudden, there I was — misty-eyed and with a slight tremble in my voice, just like my friend Ramsey — saying, "Really? You're really going to buy it?"

And, just like that, my father's car was gone.

A few years later, my father would be gone too.

Ten years after that I walk outside my house, headed for the garage to clean it out and make room for my newly purchased piece of Americana, and I look up at a bright blue Carolina sky and, as sudden as a lightning strike on the ocean, I'm crying. I'm crying because I realize I'll never again see a blue as deep and beautiful as that old Chevelle. I'm crying because I'll never again hear the roar of that engine or the boom of my father's booming voice singing Marvin Gaye as we slice through the shadow of cedar trees on a two-lane blacktop lined with cornfields and drenched in sunlight. I'm

PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON MOTT

crying because cancer took him away just like rust took his car and nothing will ever change that. I'm crying because he can't help me work on my new car. I'm crying because I'm not a child anymore and, yet, no matter how old I get, I'm always my father's son.

All of this because I decided to buy some hunk of steel and rubber.

But that's the thing about cars: The good ones are never just cars. The good ones are memories that we can touch. The good ones become part of our lives. They carry us to the hospital after nine months of anticipation, they carry us to that nerve-racking first day of school where we first learn to

Cars hold us as we move across the Earth, traveling from beach to bayou to theme park to home as we move, mile after mile, from just being people to being families.

let go and watch those we love walk away. Cars becomes places where we teach our children about persistence as they battle rusted nuts and bolts. Cars are where we talk about life as we fix flat tires. Cars hold us as we move across the Earth, traveling from beach to bayou to theme park to home as we move, mile after mile, from just being people to being families.

That's why we can go out on a spring afternoon to work on an old Mustang and remember a father's Chevelle and, for a moment, it's like he's right there beside us and, suddenly, there's no reason to cry because it feels good to have that memory walking with us. And, if we're lucky, we call out our own sons, daughters, nieces or nephews to help hold the light and, in doing so, we create new memories that the steel and rubber will always hold. Because sometimes it takes something as simple as a car to remind us that memory is meant to be a blessing and not a curse.

Jason Mott is a New York Times *best-selling author, a UNCW alumnus and current UNCW writer-in-residence.*

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Fish Crow

Savvy, smart and best known by their nasal "caw-caw"

By Susan Campbell

So you might think that a crow is a crow, right? Well, not exactly. It is not quite like the term "seagull," which is the generic name for a handful of different species found in the area. When it comes to crows, you can expect two species along our coastline: the American crow and the fish crow. Unfortunately, telling them apart is just about impossible. When they open their beaks, however, it is a different matter. The fish crow will produce a nasal "caw-caw," whereas the American will utter a single clear "caw." That single familiar sound may be repeated in succession, but it will always be one syllable. Young of the year may sound somewhat nasal at first, but they will not utter the two notes of their close cousins, the fish crow.

Both crows have jet black, glossy plumage. They have strong feet and long legs, which make for good mobility. They walk as well as hop when exploring on the ground. Also, they have relatively large, powerful bills that are effective for grabbing and holding large prey items. Crow's wings are relatively long and rounded, which allows for bursts of rapid flight as well as efficient soaring. The difference between the two species is very subtle: Fish crows are just a bit smaller. Unless you see them side by side, this is not at all apparent.

Fish crows are migratory here inland in North Carolina. It seems most of the population moves generally eastward in late fall. So numbers along the coast swell in midwinter. But visiting flocks do not stay long and are the earliest returning breeding birds to the Piedmont, arriving by early February for the breeding season. Almost as soon as they reappear, they begin nest building. Interestingly, their bulky, stick-built platforms are hard to spot, usually in the tops of large pines. And crows tend to be loosely colonial, so two or three pairs may nest close together in early spring.

Although fish crows are found near water a good bit, they wander widely. They are very opportunistic, feeding by picking at roadkill, taking advantage of dead fish washed ashore, sampling late season berries, digging up snapping turtle eggs or robbing bird feeders with ease. But they are also predatory. Even though they are large birds, they can be quite stealthy. It is not uncommon for these birds to hunt large insects in open fields, or frogs and crayfish at the water's edge. Unfortunately, fish crows are very adept nest-robbers and take a good number of eggs and nestlings during the summer.

These birds, as well as their American cousins, can become problematic. They are very smart and readily learn where to find an easy meal. At colonial waterbird nesting sites they will be mobbed by adult gulls and terns. This defense may keep the would-be attackers from success. At bird feeders, they will quietly wait until the coast is clear, especially if a savory snack of mealworms or suet can be had. Southern farmers, years ago, found that a fairly effective deterrent is to hang one of these birds in effigy to keep flocks from decimating their crops. Recently I acquired a stuffed crow from my local bird store in hopes that this method would work around my feeding station. I have also been concerned about both species of crow preying on nearby nests. Amazingly, it seems to be working. I do move it regularly to keep the attention of passing would-be marauders. And of course, it is quite the conversation starter as well.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos at susan@ncaves.com.

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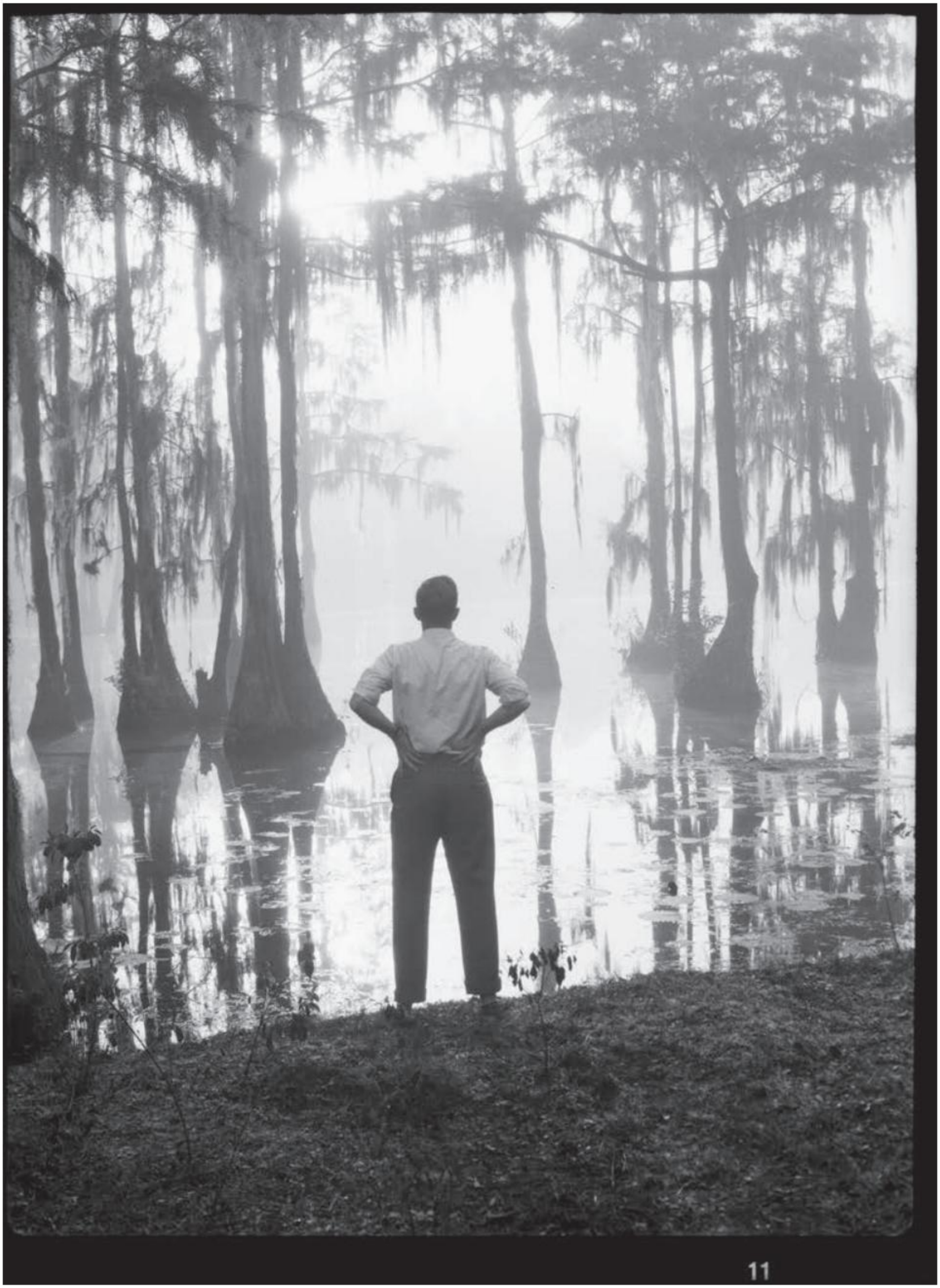
Wand

We opened the wrappers of yellow lightsticks
and broke the plastic tubes — the sound
like knuckles popping, satisfying — to let
the glow loose. Threw them high
into the dark, to see their fluorescence against
the clouded sky. No moon. Hers had just fallen
to the lawn again when I tossed mine up
and it didn't come down. Sideways, twenty feet high,
it moved along the air toward the branches
of the pecan trees, drew a neon trail
over the monkey bars my dad had built, then
dropped. She ran for the house, scared.
But I was busy: how had mine traveled? A bat
must have carried it off — flown thirty feet to be convinced
this was no snack — and let it fall. Triumphant,
already retelling the story to myself, I followed her
in to dessert, to the lit, warm space of my family,
suddenly terribly dull, even as the wand, touched
by the night world, began to fade in my hand.

– Anna Lena Philips Bell
from Ornament
courtesy of University of North Texas Press



Greenfield Lake Scenic View (1940s-early 1950s) *Man standing at the water's edge by Greenfield Lake, Wilmington, NC, with light and mist coming through the cypress trees.*

A Mountain of a Man

The enduring legacy of Hugh MacRae Morton

By Susan Taylor Block

Photographs by Hugh Morton, North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina Library at Chapel Hill

Estonians (1948) *Group of Estonians on a boat in Wilmington, NC. Probably a group led by Captain John Wortmann, who made the hazardous journey in a small craft across the Atlantic and landed at Wilmington in 1948.*

I have always loved staring at photos, particularly those with some age. One day, when I was a little girl, my mother told me I could not go in the "picture drawer" of her desk anymore because I was wearing out the old images. Forbidding access only enhanced my interest in image gazing. I have the desk now, and I still smile sometimes when I pull out that drawer. Photographs are the is-ness of the was. Wilmington native Hugh Morton (1921–2006) knew that in the deepest way.

Much has been written about the accomplishments of Hugh Morton of Wilmington and Grandfather Mountain. Rather than serve as an echo, I want to share my own fond memories of working with him on a number of writing projects. Each was enhanced by his photographic skills and exquisite sensitivity to photo-worthiness. Growing up in Wilmington, I knew the name Hugh Morton, but I never remember having seen him until about 1969. A friend pointed him out in the press pool at a Carolina basketball game in Carmichael Auditorium. My first impressions were of concentration and calm. My last impressions of him were the same.

Much later, in 1995, I wrote a short book titled *Van Eeden*. That was the name of a farm settlement owned by Hugh MacRae, grandfather of Hugh Morton. Van Eeden was first settled by immigrants from Holland. While doing research on Van Eeden in the North Carolina Collection at UNC, I happened upon the fact that Jews settled on farms in Van Eeden in the late 1930s. Jews farm? I never had heard of that in southeastern North Carolina. As it turned out, the last group of immigrants did farm a bit, but mostly because agricultural visas were the last tickets out of Hitler's regime. About a dozen Jewish families who almost certainly would have been tortured and murdered escaped to Van Eeden, where they learned the rudiments of agriculture while longing for a more lucrative future in big Northern cities.

Not long before *Van Eeden* went to print, I called Mr. Morton to ask if he

Piedmont Airlines planes in hangar (early 1950s) *Two of the first Douglas DC-3 aircraft in service for Piedmont Airlines, housed in a Wilmington, NC hangar.*

had a photograph of his grandfather that might match well with such a subject. He did, and that picture, taken roughly 50 years before *Van Eeden* was published, became a wordless introduction to the booklet. Mr. Morton called me back later to offer a few memories the photo had stirred to the top of his mind, as if the photograph were a spoon; and the past, a bowl of pudding.

The picture arrived in my mailbox within a few days of my request. It was in perfect condition, and was sealed in a big white envelope with a "Grandfather Mountain" return address. From that time on, my heart must have beat a bit faster when I spotted any big white envelope in the day's mail. I always was hoping for another "Morton," and another explanatory phone call.

It was interesting to hear him talk. His voice was strong but soft, like rock wrapped in velvet. Both the sound of his voice and the cadence of his words were similar to the sound and rhythm in which his relatives speak today. Hugh MacRae II, Hugh MacRae III, and Daniel MacRae; all speak in like fashion. On the female side, Mr. Morton's daughter, Catherine, also has speech patterns that remind me of her father.

In 1997, Janet Seapker, director of the Cape Fear Museum, asked me to write a trilogy of photograph anthologies that I titled *Along the Cape Fear, Cape Fear Lost* and *Cape Fear Beaches*. It was then that Mr. Morton began to send photos much more frequently, and that trend held for almost 10 years. Since the first book was to be a miscellany, I wrote and asked if he would share local photos with me that had some poetry embedded in them. A few days later, he called me from Orton Plantation, where he was visiting his lifelong friend, Kenneth Murchison Sprunt. "Po-e-try?" Mr. Morton asked, slowly.

That request yielded a large number of prints, and there was, indeed, a bit of poetry in each.

At some point, Mr. Morton asked me to meet him one day for lunch, to go over the next request for photos. I was looking forward to a delicious light meal and wondered what sort of car he drove. The restaurant he chose was a popular local eatery that featured heavy sauces and porterhouse steak; and he pulled up driving a broken-in Oldsmobile. Another thing that illustrates the refreshing down-to-earth-ness of this mountain dweller was the fact that while developing Wilmington's South Live Oak Parkway in Wilmington, he himself planted the trees.

Working with Hugh Morton to use his photographs as illustrations, explanations and celebrations was a grand experience, but what I remember most

1959 Azalea Festival Coronation (April 4, 1959) *Crowning of Azalea Queen Debra Paget (center) at the 1959 Azalea Festival, Wilmington, NC. Teenage Princess Nancy Stovall (second from left), Master of Ceremonies Ronald Reagan (third from left) and Governor Luther Hodges (third from right) are among those present.*

1953 Azalea Festival Parade (March 28, 1953) *High school marching band ("S.H.S., North Carolina"), in the 1953 Azalea Festival Parade marching past Thalian Hall in Wilmington, NC.*

Fire, Orton Hotel (January 21, 1949) *Firefighters spraying water on the burning Royal Theater, two buildings away from the Orton Hotel in Wilmington, NC, while a small crowd looks on. Theater marquee reads "Leo Gorcey and the Bowery Boys in Another Hit 'Trouble Makers.'"*

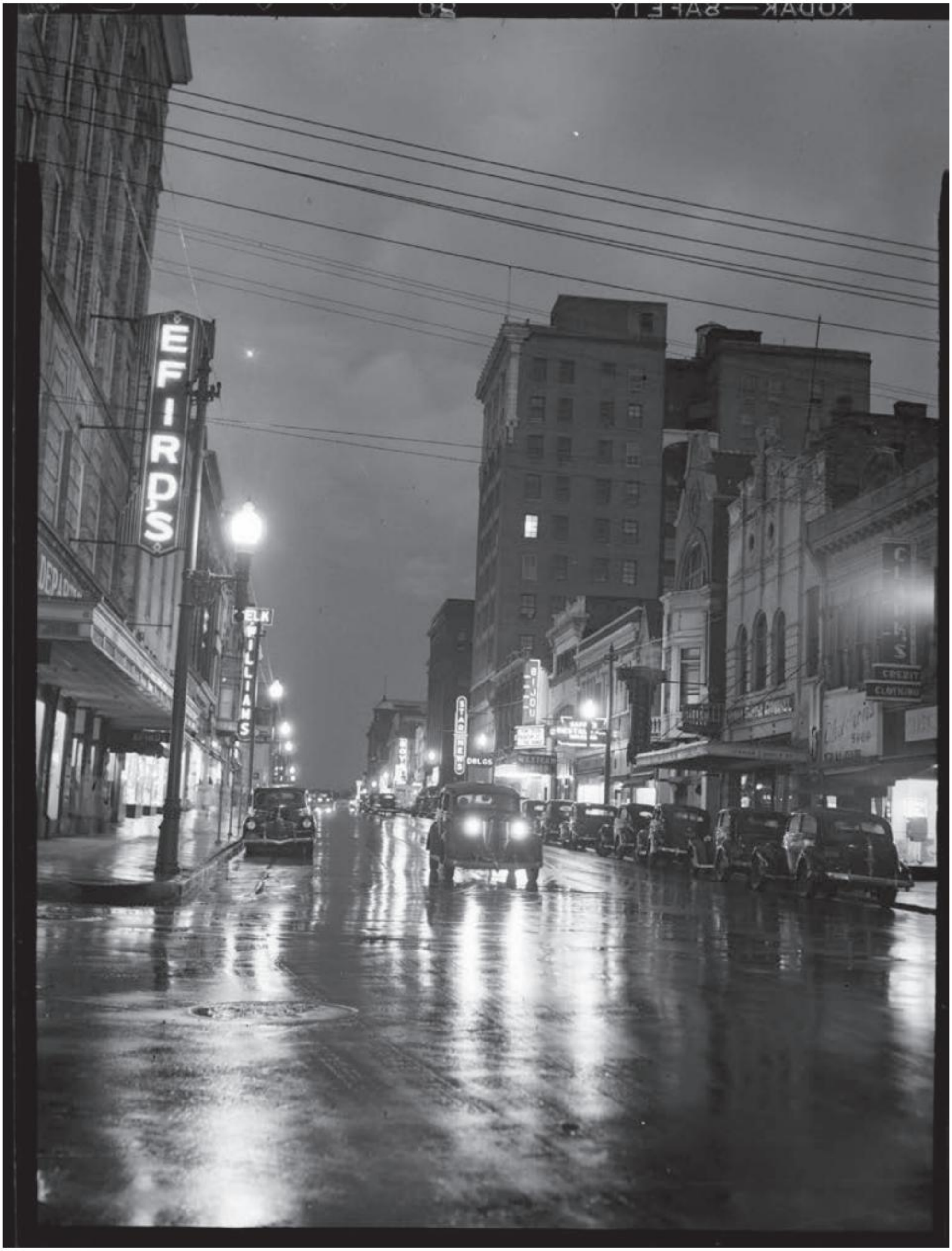
Soap Box Derby (1948) *Boy at the 1948 Soap Box Derby in Wilmington, NC, in car labeled "Port City Jay-Cees." Filed by photographer under "Wilmington Jaycees."*

was a comment he had made in the "local eatery." He referred to the afterlife, and said that there would be rewards for hard work. It seemed to me that Mr. Morton worked all the time. Even snapping pictures of Michael Jordan suspended in air was work for him because he always sought perfection. I am but one of hundreds of writers who benefited from the work and inspiration of Mr. Morton. I will always be grateful.

There came a time when mailings from Mr. Morton became less frequent. Then one day he called from Grandfather Mountain to tell the sad news that he was sick. His doctor said that he would not be "around" for very long. I will always miss having a friend like him who fully understood getting gloriously engaged in a two-dimensional world. But there will always be his pictures.

Hugh Morton's photograph collection is carefully stored and preserved in Wilson Library, at the photographer's beloved alma mater, the University of North Carolina. Robert Anthony Jr. is curator of the vast North Carolina Collection, in which the Morton photos are housed. Stephen J. Fletcher, the North Carolina Collection photographic archivist, states that the total number of Hugh Morton photographs housed there is "about 250,000."

Susan Taylor Block is one of Salt's earliest contributors.



Downtown Wilmington at Night (Probably 1947) *Looking south on 200 block of N. Front Street, downtown Wilmington, NC at night, in the rain. Signs for Efird's, Clark's Clothing, the Bijou Theater, and the Star News are visible. Tall building in center is Murchison Building. Photograph (cropped and straightened) appears on cover of the 29 November 1947 issue of THE STATE magazine.*

Cape Fear Bridge Construction (late 1960s) *Aerial view showing construction of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge on the Cape Fear River, Wilmington, NC.*

Sea Leopard (1950s) *Crowd gathered to see submarine "Sea Leopard," parked on the Wilmington, NC waterfront, 1950s.*

Hugh Morton (1921–2006), Conservationist and Photographer, At a Glance:

1935: *Time* magazine published one of Hugh Morton's photographs for the first time when he was only 14 years old.

1942–45: Hugh Morton was awarded both the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, after being wounded in the line of duty as a newsreel photographer.

1948: Morton served as the first president of the Azalea Festival. He caused the event to be a great success because of his promotions, careful choosing of celebrities and leadership skills, launching the largest and longest running locally run celebration in North Carolina history.

1950: Hugh Morton gave Andy Griffith an assist when he invited him to do a standup comedy routine for the North Carolina Press Association. That event launched Griffith's career.

1952–2006: Hugh Morton inherited Grandfather Mountain and added the Mile High Swinging Bridge, Visitors Center, a Weather Reporting Station, nature museum, theater and wildlife habitats for native species. Rather than allow the National Park Service to bore through Grandfather Mountain to create a 7.7-mile stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway, Morton directed the government to build Linn Cove Viaduct, a solution that preserved the ancient beauty and order of the mountain. Hugh Morton contributed 3,000 acres of Grandfather Mountain to the Nature Conservatory.

1961: More than any other man, Hugh Morton made it possible for the *USS North Carolina* to be berthed permanently in the Cape Fear River. His connections, promotions and cheerleader spirit brought the ship to its new home. Everything went smoothly until the battleship collided with a floating seafood restaurant, and Hugh Morton even turned that into a positive publicity tool by sharing photos he took of the incident.

1982: A longtime sports photographer for UNC, Hugh Morton chose Michael Jordan to crown Lynda Goodfriend, Queen Azalea XXXV, just 10 days after freshman Jordan sunk the winning shot in the 1982 NCAA Tournament.

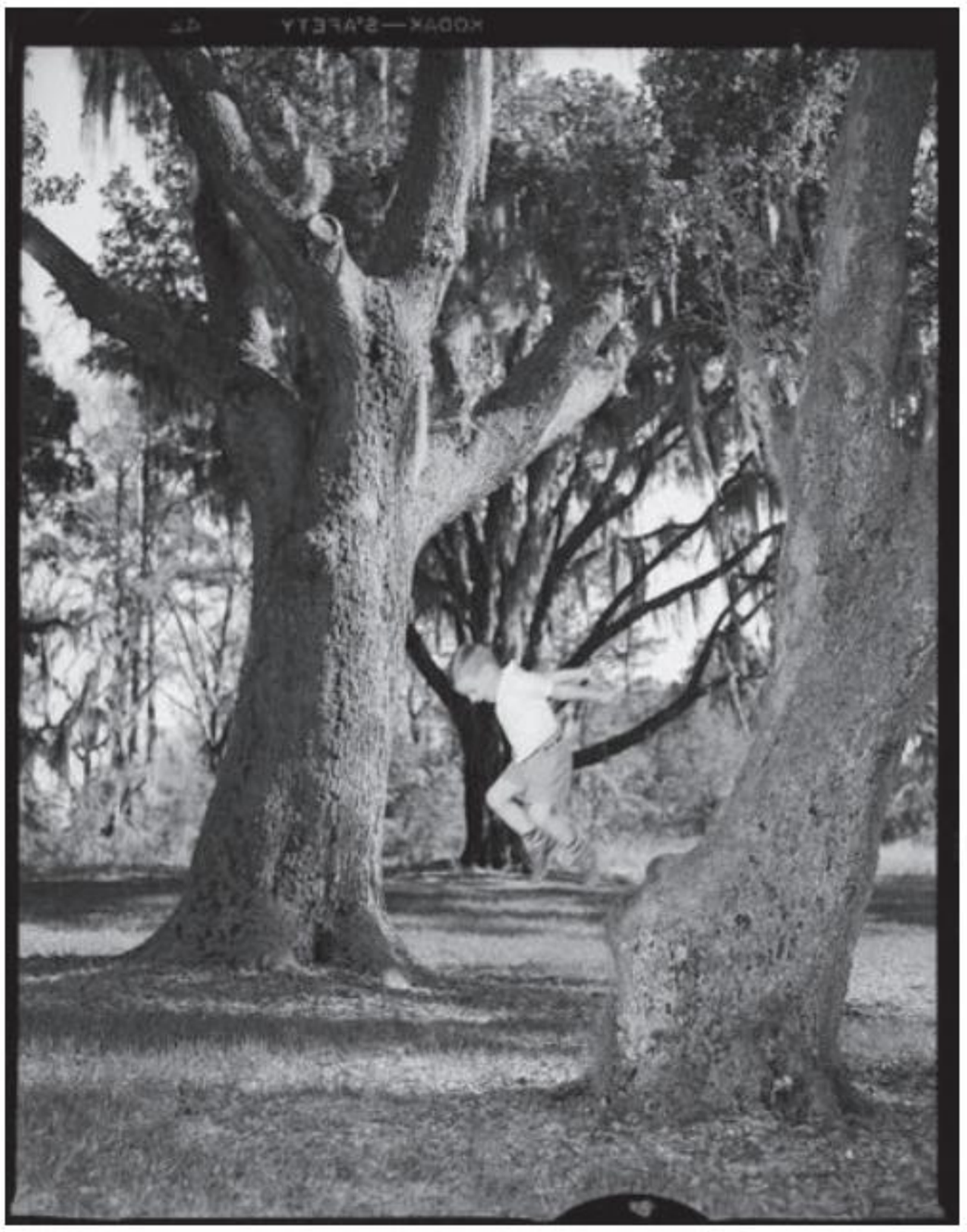
1990: President George H.W. Bush presented Morton with the Theodore Roosevelt Award for Conservation.

1995: He produced film documentaries including *The Search for Clean Air* on PBS, narrated by Walter Cronkite.

1988-2006: Morton received at least seven honorary doctorate degrees from Belmont Abbey, Lees-McRae College, Queens College, UNC Asheville, UNC Wilmington, Appalachian State and NC State.

2003–2006: He published two books, *Hugh Morton's North Carolina* and *Hugh Morton: North Carolina Photographer.*

There is little documentation of Hugh Morton having exchanges with other Wilmington photographers, but Morton and Louis T. Moore did converse from time to time. Mr. Moore took a thousand panoramic shots of southeastern North Carolina. The two met periodically, from 1945 until 1961. "Mr. Moore was a great man," wrote Morton, in 2000. "He, for the most part, had influence on me from the standpoint of appreciating history. I learned more from him about history, and the role that my family played in it." Orton Plantation was a favorite subject for both of their cameras, and it seems they would be pleased to know that Mr. Moore's grandson, Louis Moore Bacon, now owns Orton.



Spanish moss, Oaks (1950s) *Boy (probably Hugh Morton Jr.) jumping from oak tree. Probably taken near Wilmington, NC.*

Airlie Gardens, Wilmington, NC (1940s)
Julia Morton (the photographer's wife) posing against the Airlie Oak at Airlie Gardens, Wilmington, NC

The Last Trapper

In a world where the wild places are rapidly vanishing, critter man Jimmy English sees everything through "gator eyes"

By John Wolfe

The first day I rode with wildlife handler and master trapper Jimmy English, we caught a red fox — a rust-colored baby with a white cotton-ball-tipped tail and the frightened look of an animal that knows it has been trapped. They had been digging a den under the house of an old woman whose father built boats; the dirt they had dug out would fill wheelbarrows. If they kept at it, Jimmy said, they would excavate a cavity underneath the concrete foundation that could cause the building to collapse. He had lured the baby fox into his trap, a metal cage with a spring-loaded hinge on the end, with a Honey Bun: "They like sweet things, and cats don't."

When Jimmy grabbed the fox by the scruff to move it into a smaller trap, the baby shrieked. Suddenly, there came a bark from the woods, a sharp and morose-sounding yip. A wild sound. "Hear Momma?" asked Jimmy. I turned and peered into the trees. The distant silhouette of an adult fox materialized, barked once more, then vanished into the foliage. Jimmy carried the trapped fox to his truck, placed it gently in the bed, and covered it with a burlap sack so it wouldn't overheat in the sun.

The question Jimmy hears most after trapping an animal is, "What are you going to do with it?" The answer to that question often depends on the animal. The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, the governmental body that issues the permits Jimmy needs to do his work, mandates rules Jimmy must follow. These rules prevent the spread of rabies, a virus which can live dormant inside

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BUBBA ENGLISH

an animal for up to six months without obvious symptoms, and sometimes the rules require the ending of an animal's life. (Don't worry — the aforementioned fox is going to be just fine.) But Jimmy is never cruel. "I don't taunt animals," he says. "I do what I've got to do, and treat them as gentle as I can, without them hurting themselves — or me." He chuckles. "I'm number one."

Jimmy started his business, Wildlife Removal Service, in 1998, but has been hunting, fishing and trapping his entire life, which is where he acquired the skills necessary to do what he does. "I was a little boy born in the country, right here on Myrtle Grove Sound." His hands are massive and leathery, and his large, sun-beaten ears and nose reveal his octogenarian status. He is old enough that, in the Wilmington of his memory, the intersection of College and Oleander was a field with a few ponies and a sycamore tree. Despite his age, he moves with a quiet animal intensity that many younger men never achieve. "I guess there ain't many people my age still working," he says, but he keeps doing it. "I don't know, I've always done it and I have to eat."

Jimmy's formal education ended in the eighth grade, because "the suspense of checking my rabbit traps out in the woods outweighed the necessity of catching the school bus." With an ornery gleam in his weathered blue eyes, he tells me when he revealed that fact to Jim Leutze, a lifelong educator who wrote an article about him for *Metro* magazine. Mr. Leutze asked him what he would do differently if he could go back and live his life again. "He probably expected me to say finish school," Jimmy says with a laugh. "But I told him, 'I'd go back and catch more rabbits.'"

As I ride beside him in his pickup truck with our little red fox in the back, Jimmy asks me if I've ever been to Figure Eight Island. I have not. "Would you like to go? I've got to check my coyote trap." Certainly, I say. I didn't know there were coyotes here. Oh yes, he says, they're in "every state in the union, except maybe Hawaii." They're diggers too — the main reason they're a problem. That, and their appetite for house pets.

We cross the bridge. Jimmy jokes with the gate guard as he hands him his well-worn access pass. As we drive to the house (OK, mansion) where his trap is, he reminisces about growing up on Myrtle Grove Sound, when there were only half a dozen families that lived in that area. I ask him what effect the recent population growth on the coast has had on his business. Has he seen more incidence of animal encounters, now that humans have developed formerly wild spaces? "We're not on (animal) territory," he mutters, "they're on our territory! The Bible says God gave man dominion over the animals of the Earth." But the short answer is yes.

At the beach house, we find another mound of sand beside a hole burrowed under the concrete. No footprints in the sand; nothing in the trap. I am thankful for this — if the trap was full, Jimmy would have taken his .22 from the truck and put a bullet in the head of the coyote. And that's when I understand the full extent of the brutality, and thanklessness, of his line of work. Most of the time, he tells me, the people who watch him work often sympathize with the animal. When he's down in the mud with a big alligator, risking life and limb and drenched in sweat and mud, inevitably he hears someone in the back of the gathered crowd say, "Awww . . ." when he tapes the gator's mouth shut.

Yet we need Jimmy, for the world we live in is still wild in many ways, and some people lack the skills or the stomach to deal with it. Perhaps the people who hire him know what the eventual fate of the animal might be, but they don't want to witness it firsthand. Jimmy makes his living in the space between the choices that we make regarding animals, and the consequences of those choices.

We wander over the dunes. Jimmy and I look out over the Atlantic. He asks if I've ever heard the old joke about the man from the mountains who has never seen the sea: In his old age his children save their money and take him to the coast and place him on the sand, and he looks out over the glittering expanse in silence. "His children ask him, 'Well, Father, what do you think?'" Jimmy says, a thin smile on his lips. "The old man turns and shakes his head. 'I don't know,' he says. 'I thought it would be bigger.'"

Jimmy promised I could come along the next time he got a call for an alligator. And so began the two weeks of my life I spent on Gator Watch, awaiting the phone call with Jimmy's soft drawl on the other end, upgrading me to Gator Warning. The real trouble with waiting around for an alligator is that alligators don't keep schedules, or make appointments, or even set reminders on their cellphones. They lie on the banks of the river all day, and whenever they feel like it they slink off to a retention pond, or the fairway of the ninth hole by the water hazard, where they continue to go about their gator business of basking in the sun until some surprised homeowner calls Jimmy English.

The phone doesn't ring. Try as I might, I can't make the gator appear. Perhaps there's a larger lesson here, something about not being able to bend the world to your will all the time. So I give in. Sipping tea on my back porch, I watch the boughs wave on the pecan tree. I feel very much as an alligator might, waiting sleepily in the noontime sun. My watch slips off my wrist as I enter the weird limbo of Gator Time: I have no deadlines, no rent to pay, just a deep appreciation for blue sky and puffy white clouds, the dappled feeling of sun on my skin filtered through the treetops, the smell of flowers. This is the immediate world of the gator. Then, from somewhere in the strange regimented world of humanity surrounding me, comes a faint ringing sound . . .

Jimmy and I are driving over the bridge into Brunswick County. A pink sunset in front of us to the west; the silhouette of a great egret flying against it. We are heading toward a lake in a new development over here (Jimmy doesn't want me to say which one, exactly, but you know the ones I mean, a well-manicured community filled with retired New Yorkers). Apropos of nothing, Jimmy, in his glorious Old Carolina accent, says, "We-aa-ll, old al-uh-gay-tuhs . . . They're just as lost as I am, in this society that we're livin' in now . . . Poor ol' things, tryin' to get across the road, he don't know and he don't understand. They're about like me, tryin' to get around in traffic." We share a laugh, the young transplanted writer and the old native critter man, then, wistfully, he says, "We're both out of place." And it is the truest thing he's said to me so far. "I guess the world has built up around you both," I add. "Yeah," he says. "We're maladjusted to times. I see everything through the gator's eyes."

An alligator's eyes reflect fire red when a beam of light bounces off them. Dusk has passed, and we're at the lake. A low, red full moon rises from the eastern treeline. It's a little of a needle-in-a-haystack scenario; quite a bit of detective work is involved in tracking down the gator. As Jimmy says, "If you can't find him, you can't catch him."

Alligators are nocturnal, feeding more often at night. Jimmy's son, Bubba, wears a helmet with a high-powered flashlight on the front. He is scanning the fringes of the lake, the beam sweeping across the far banks, cutting through the blackness. "There's an ol' bullfrog," he says, pointing to where two specks of yellow reflect back toward us. Bubba is shorter than Jimmy, stocky and powerfully built. He has been working alongside his father, helping out with the big gators, for 20 years. Bubba has nicknamed this gator Houdini, because he is so difficult to find. "There's about 3 or 4 miles of water connected back here," says Bubba. "He could be anywhere."

I don't get to meet Houdini tonight, but Jimmy calls me a few days later—he's got a gator in the back of his truck from Salter Path. I miss the catch, but Jimmy has told me enough about it that I can

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN WOLFE

visualize it. He catches more than 50 alligators every year, and the tactics he uses are different each time. Typically, he says, "The gators I move have been fed by the public. And so when they see me, they think I've come to feed them. And they'll approach me, and I'll keep feeding them, throwing the bait closer and closer to me, until he gets close enough that I can catch him with a noose. If that doesn't work, we can set a trap to catch him."

OK I say, so you've got the noose on him. What's next? "Go on 'im!" says Jimmy. What? Just go on him? "Yeah! No other way."

"What's going through your mind when your hands are on that gator, Jimmy?" I ask.

"I have strictly, 100 percent, got my mind on my business," he replies. "There could be a thousand people standin' around there, and I wouldn't know they were there. You take your mind off your business, and in a split second, you're minus an arm. When a gator bites you, he's just like a turtle — he bites and holds on. And the more you try to get him off, the tighter he bites. He's a tenacious little bulldog. And anybody who gets bit by a gator, and the gator just turns him loose? The Lord is smilin' on him." Has that ever happened? "Little ones, yeah. I been eaten up before by the little ones, taking chances. Might be compared to grabbing a running chainsaw. I ain't gonna take no chances with the big ones."

Jimmy invites me over to meet the gator. He and Bubba are preparing to inject a microchip into the gator's flank, and take tissue samples from two of the scutes, or ridges, on the gator's back, at the request of state biologists. Then they will release him in the Green Swamp or Holly Shelter. I pull up to the house, walk up to the back of Jimmy's truck, and good God, there's an alligator staring back at me, two lizard eyes on a massive green-black head, fading to a muddy yellow underneath. This animal is eight feet long and 275 pounds, but I can't take my eyes off the mouth, which retains its toothy menace, even though it's wrapped shut. The gator sits inside a black plastic corrugated drainage tube, which Jimmy designed and specially modified for relocating alligators. There is a hatch closing one end and a cage capping the other, with two handles on each side for lifting.

Even though he's contained, I feel a primal rush of fear, a squirt of adrenaline. This is a predator. Jimmy says that when an alligator focuses on something he wants to catch, he doesn't take his eyes off it, something he calls tunnel vision. This gator looks at me that way now, and I'm glad Jimmy English has come between me and it. But as terrifying as it is, it is beautiful, too — sleek and dark, with the texture of weathered creek stone, the sublime beauty of the shark and tiger. A creature put on this planet for one purpose: to eat, to consume, to grow as big as it can. I see the wild part of myself reflected in its eyes.

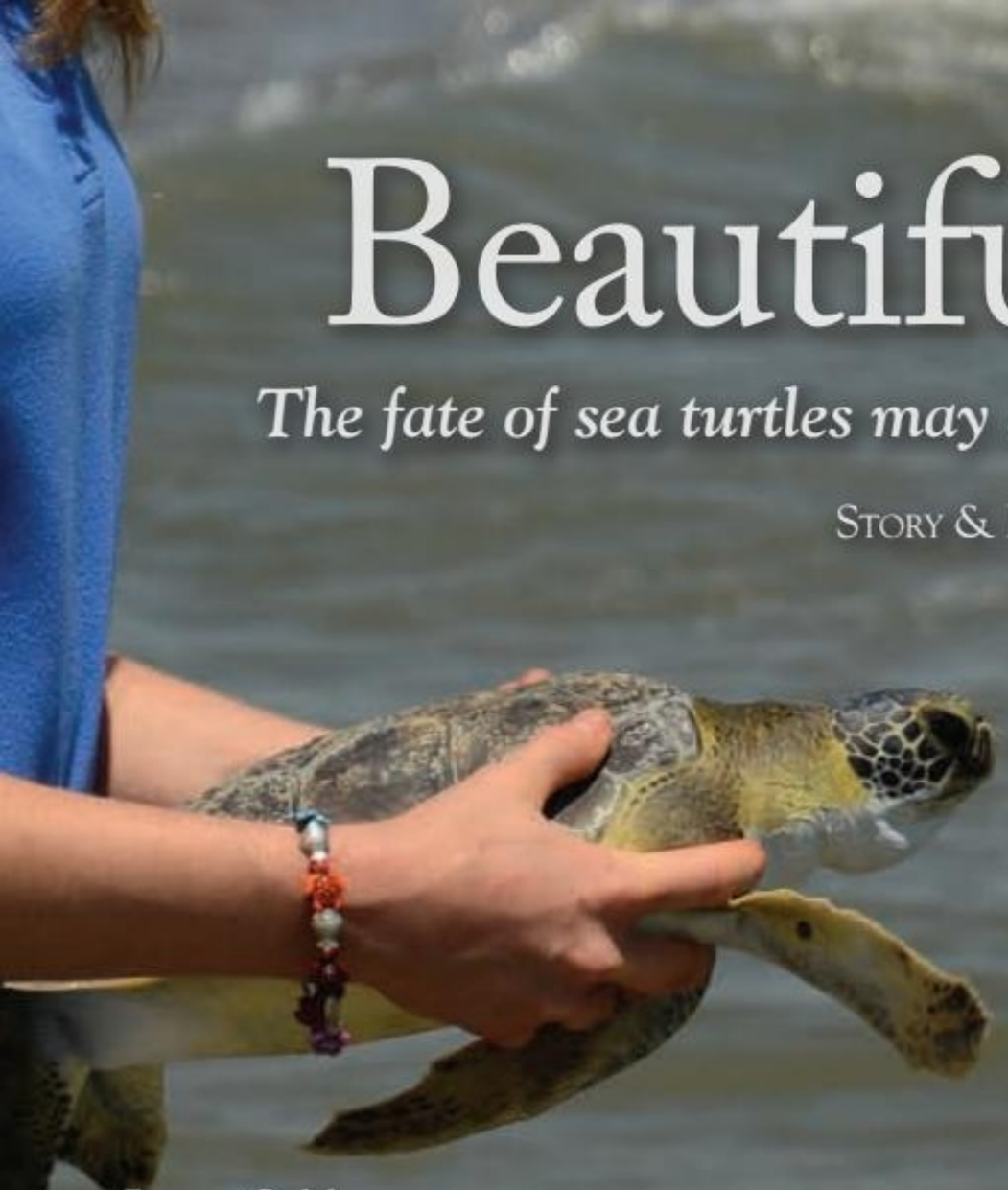
John Wolfe studied creative nonfiction at UNCW. When he's not in the water, he wishes he were.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN WOLFE

Beautiful Swimmers

The fate of sea turtles may depend upon the aid of those who love them

Story & Photographs by Virginia Holman



Long Odds

Nearly 15 years ago, around midnight, I stood on a beach in Tortuguero National Park in Costa Rica with my husband and son and a handful of other travelers, hoping to catch a glimpse of a nesting green sea turtle. The moon was nowhere to be seen, so we walked carefully in the dim starlight, shuffling in a single-file line. Our guide shone a small red light on the sand, scanning for turtle tracks. We whispered, looked toward the faint glint of the sea, and hoped. After 15 minutes or so, our guide became a bit impatient, told us to stay put and went off with his red penlight to look for turtles. We craned our necks as he shone the faint beam across the beach, walking farther and farther away from where we stood. In the distance, his light began to look an awful lot like the lit tip of a cigarette. I was annoyed, contemplating whether to complain politely when my son tapped my arm.

"There's one," he said. I scanned the beach but came up empty. Then I heard the soft scrape of a turtle shell on the sand. My eyes were still adjusting to the dark when I saw a turtle that looked like a large gray boulder. Someone went off to alert our guide. "There's another," he said. "And another." Soon we realized there were six or seven green turtles hauling their heavy bodies across the sand. We stepped aside and watched these giants drag themselves far above the tideline to dig a nest. The turtles flung sand several feet in the air as they dug and burrowed into the beach. At last they stilled, and we were able to watch one turtle quietly. As a mother who had labored through a long childbirth, I felt a certain physical and emotional kinship with that turtle. Her body was full of the future. Her face streamed with tears (said to manage the balance of salt in her body but that might be interpreted as weeping) and she was simultaneously tremendously powerful and wholly vulnerable. Then she opened and released nearly a hundred eggs into the nest she'd made. They looked like glistening Ping-Pong balls. The guide told us that only one in a thousand female sea turtles grows to maturity and returns to shore to nest again.

Soon the turtle pulled herself back to the sea and slipped into the dark water. It was impossible not to experience a bit of existential wonder. How improbable, how mysterious, was her hatching? How fraught was her return to nest in the area where she'd come alive, incubating beneath the warm sand? Add to that the long odds of any one person seeing this mature sea turtle in the wild. That's the sort of wonder I mean. The kind that makes you ache with the awareness that you are too briefly alive in this living world.

Survival at Sea

When I moved to the coast, I hoped to glimpse sea turtles, and I thought the first one I'd see would be at a nesting site. Instead, I was surprised to see loggerheads in the waters around Carolina Beach all summer long. Sometimes one would be visible swimming in the green sunlit waves, but mostly I saw their heads as they surfaced for air. The first time a loggerhead rose for breath near the bow of my kayak, I was startled. A 20-year-old loggerhead turtle may have a head the size of a supermarket cabbage, with powerful jaws and a carapace the size of an ottoman. Loggerheads are indiscriminate diners. They love jellyfish, but they also eat crunchy whelks, conchs, horseshoe crabs, clams and mussels. If it's in the water and looks like food, a loggerhead will likely take a bite. That's a great survival strategy for the species, but only as long as what looks like turtle food isn't something else.

Unfortunately, an increase in ocean debris — most notably single-use plastic shopping bags and fishing line — are significant contributors to the sea turtle population decline. Plastic bags discarded on land easily flow into our waterways. Curious loggerheads, thinking that these bags are jellyfish, will try to eat them. Plastic bag consumption usually leads to illness and death. Discarded fishing line also presents a hazard, wrapping around turtle fins and shells, causing injury and restricting movement. At the coast, we remind our visitors to avoid using single-use bags and to place trash and damaged fishing line in the proper receptacles. In addition, fishing nets are a proven hazard to sea turtles, and as commercial fishing has increased exponentially in the last 20 years, the risk to migrating sea turtles has spiked. Sea turtles must surface regularly to breathe, unlike fish, and the stress of entanglement often causes them to drown within a relatively short period of time. The number of sea turtles that have perished from nets isn't easily tallied, as they are considered fishing "bycatch," or collateral damage.

In the late 1970s, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) began developing nets that had Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs). These cleverly designed "escape hatches" allowed turtles to slip through the nets while retaining the targeted species. As the nets were slowly adopted, however, it became clear that the older and bigger turtles proved too big for the excluders and they usually perished if caught. Over the last decade, NOAA has mandated larger excluder openings as a corrective. Most U.S. trawling operations are obliged to use TEDs, and the technology is being employed by some other nations as well — something that bodes well, since sea turtles are international travelers. For the most part, commercial fishing boats are embracing the changes as a way to reduce bycatch.

Although there isn't a single reason for sea turtle decline, it's shocking that these ancient inhabitants of the Earth — they have been around for 150 million years and survived the extinction of the dinosaurs — are listed as endangered species. The story of sea turtles is one of our planet's great survival stories. And if humans are the cause of the turtles' demise, many are also working to help these beautiful swimmers.

Dawn Patrol/Evening Watch

Each beach community along the Cape Fear coast has a sea turtle monitoring program. During nesting season, from May to September, volunteers patrol the coastline each morning at dawn. Some ride fat-tired bicycles, some are on foot, and some, like the volunteers with the Pleasure Island Sea Turtle Project, ride the strand on Gators — four-wheel-drive golf carts with rugged wheels capable of riding in soft sand.

Veteran turtle volunteer Rob Pomeranz took me on a ride-along this spring. We rode the length of Carolina Beach and back while another volunteer drove the length of Kure Beach to Fort Fisher. Each Gator is equipped with a tool box full of the items we might need if we see a nest. There are wooden stakes, orange plastic fox netting to prevent predators like foxes and raccoons from excavating eggs, and several large egg crates. "Sometimes if a nest is too close to shore or in a high-traffic area, we must excavate it and relocate it to a safer location," says Pomeranz.

He has seen evidence of many turtle crawls over the years: "Nesting sea turtles leave tractor-like tracks from the shoreline to the beach." They tend to slip onto shore deep at night, so it's rare to see the turtles. A few years ago he got lucky and saw an enormous loggerhead onshore before she slipped back to sea. "I have a picture of it on my Facebook page." He smiles and shakes his head. "That was a great morning."

Sometimes Pomeranz gets emergency calls for sea turtle help. "Once we got a call from a policeman on patrol that an unidentified nest was boiling on Carolina Beach near the Tiki Bar, but that the babies were going in the wrong direction. All the lights from a nearby building confused the babies, and they were crawling up to the dunes and heading into parking lots. It was a mess! We were fishing babies out of the swimming pool. That's why it's important to identify nests." When an identified nest comes close to hatching time, black silk fencing is constructed around the nest, creating a fabric chute that helps direct the babies to the ocean. Volunteers often sit with a nest round the clock when a turtle hatching, or "boil," is imminent.

Then, three days after the hatch, the nest is excavated for unhatched eggs and stragglers.

Nancy Busovne, volunteer coordinator for the Pleasure Island Sea Turtle Project for the last 15 years, says that the program has helped educate many seaside businesses and homeowners about the needs of nesting turtles. They keep the beachfront lights off at night and instruct people to step away from any turtle they see and call 911. They will send someone out to assist. Though we all love sea turtles, it's important to realize that when they are on land, they are stressed. Lights from flashlights, cellphones or porches can disorient and blind them, and approaching a nesting sea turtle may cause her to return to the sea to discharge her eggs. So if you are lucky enough to see one, step back, call the police, and encourage others to do the same. They will allow spectators to view at a safe distance.

When a nest is discovered, Busovne removes one egg and extracts the contents as part of the Northern Recovery Unit Loggerhead DNA Project. "We used to say that sea turtles return to the exact beach where they are born, but that's not always true," she says. "It seems to be about 50/50. Through DNA analysis we've found out that one season a turtle laid six nests from the Outer Banks to South Carolina." And in Cape Romain, South Carolina, Busovne notes that DNA sampling identified that three generations of sea turtles had returned to the same beach one nesting season.

We are fortunate to have experts close at hand to assist local sea turtles. Both the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Hospital in Topsail and the STAR (Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center) program at the North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island are equipped to take injured turtles from anywhere from a couple of weeks to a couple of years. (Both are open to the public.) Staff and trained volunteers help a wide range of injuries, from propeller blade cuts to cold stunned turtles, which is basically a form of hypothermia that causes the turtles to become sluggish and vulnerable to stranding and predation.

This past winter, North Carolina suffered a brutal cold snap, and the STAR program received 17 cold-stunned turtles. They were sheltered until spring arrived. In early May, they were driven by van to the warmer waters near the Fort Fisher Aquarium. Most of the turtles were loggerheads and green sea turtles, but there was also a rare Kemp's Ridley, one of the most critically endangered species. A small crowd gathered to watch as STAR staff and park rangers tagged the turtles and carried the crates to the beach. Several loggerheads were so big they required a team of four to lift. The green sea turtles were smaller. As soon as a volunteer removed one from its crate, turtle fins waved ecstatically. Children and parents held out their phones to take pictures, and then, one by one, the turtles were set on the shore and released back to the sea. They vanished from sight within seconds, gliding through the waves, fortunate to be alive in our living world, surviving another day against the odds.

Virginia Holman is a regular Salt *contributor and teaches in the creative writing department at UNCW.*

My Full-Size Life

A millennial family wants for nothing in their custom tiny house on wheels

By Isabel Zermani · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

In recent years, the tiny house trend has become something of a craze, launching prefab builders like Tumbleweed Tiny Homes (starting at $50,000); TV shows like *Tiny House Nation*; and the trending hashtag #vanlife, where one can follow bikini-clad Instagrammers doing Downward-Facing Dog on the roof of their full-time home, a VW Westfalia. It surely seems like a millennial movement. But is it such a new idea?

Henry David Thoreau's book *Walden* recounts his life in a tiny home he built on Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts, scandalizing 1845 society by choosing to live separate from it. Thomas Jefferson lived as a bachelor in a one-room brick house for two years before adding a second when he married. Together, the couple lived 3 1/2 years in this honeymoon cottage until he finished building Monticello around 1775. Frontier cabins dot the United States recalling a time of exploration, self-sufficiency and a Laura Ingalls Wilder-style family where a one-room cabin with sleeping loft is cozy, not crazy.

Indeed, small living is woven into the fabric of America, and the desire for freedom is the prominent thread. The only difference now is that many tiny housers are driven less by necessity and more by choice. And what many were trying to amass is what some want freedom from.

One pioneering family in Brunswick County made a bold choice to trade in their three-bedroom starter home and L-shaped sectional for a 192-square-foot tiny house on wheels.

Scott and Jess Young McCaffrey had been toying with the idea of a tiny home for a few years, but put it on hold to have a baby girl, Phoenix. But they couldn't shake the desire. "When she was 6 months old, we thought, 'Maybe

Loggerhead
Production
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Beach

"We worked on the purge for months," says Jess, remembering the plethora of kitchen tools she sifted through. "We got it down to our Vitamix and a few pots and pans."

Everyday Blessings
THE MOON JUICE COOKBOOK
SENDAK
WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE
The LORAX
Dr. Seuss

we can do that,'" says Jess inside her sunny tiny home built inside an old film production truck. "We looked it up on Craigslist and bought it within 48 hours." That was last year. They started the build in October and were moved in by February.

"I'm not a micro-minimalist," says Jess. It's true. A glance around the room notes many elements totally atypical of a *Portlandia*-worthy tiny house (where the cat box is attached to the ironing board) like a full-size washer and dryer, a full-size fridge and range-top, a 55-inch flat-screen TV and 1 1/2 bathrooms. With water, electricity, gas, mini-split AC/heating units, the yet-to-be-named tiny home has regular amenities, just super-low bills and the ability to go off the grid. Jealous yet?

The age-old question: "The beach or the mountains?" can be answered by releasing the parking brake and heading west: "We'd like to travel with her (Phoenix) as many places as we can before school schedules." At 18 months old, a bubbly Phoenix gives a tour of her toy basket, her best friend Lola (the dog) and the T-shirt she sports that says, aptly, "Save Our Planet. Raise a Hippie."

Ample windows make the living area feel spacious. A floor-to-ceiling glass door can be opened for a breeze or covered for privacy with an on-trend barn door. The full-size kitchen sink and custom wood countertops shine in afternoon light. A neutral color palette and select furnishings like a tufted futon (for overnight guests), antique white hutch and textured rug create a little interest while keeping a soothing mood throughout.

Jess is a designer by profession. After nine years at local style institution Edge of Urge, she's begun her own jewelry line, Phoenix Makes, and shifted focus: "My heart has a passion for wellness." Scott works with commercial cooking equipment and HVAC, making him indispensable for planning the functionality of the home.

Perhaps wellness is the new frontier, one millennials are pioneering with less stuff instead of more. The McCaffreys have figured out exactly

what they need — "A tiny house definitely keeps you accountable." And what they don't. "We worked on the purge for months," says Jess, remembering the plethora of kitchen tools she sifted through. "We got it down to our Vitamix and a few pots and pans."

"Luckily, I listened to a podcast when I was two months pregnant that said, 'Get rid of all your clothes now because you're not going to fit in them,'" and she did. Their current clothes storage uses open shelving. "An open closet keeps us honest," says Jess with the knowing wink of someone who, mid-move, has shouted to the skies, *Why do I keep all this crap?* The difference is that she and her husband did three rounds of stuff purging before this last move and now have consciences as clean as Jon Kabat-Zinn, one of authors on their shelf to make it past all three rounds.

Is there anything you miss? I ask. "Not really," says Jess, who notes that now they spend 50 percent of their time outside doing things, but concedes, "My husband misses our couch." Ah, the lure of the big sectional.

As far as tiny homes go, this is a pretty posh one. There isn't a lot to miss because it's all there, neatly organized into one main living space, a closet, a bathroom and a sleeping loft.

Up a staircase of hidden cabinets, the sleeping loft sits above the cab of the truck with a California king-size bed and enough headroom to sit up and lounge in comfort. Before moving in, "My biggest concern was: Is the bedroom going to feel cramped?" Jess happily reports that it does not. "We also get a nice cross breeze," she says and can sleep with the windows open or flip on the mini-split and cool it in an instant.

A small footprint means low energy consumption — an important principle for this eco-friendly family — and high-end finishes are more accessible when used in smaller quantity: custom cabinetry, quality windows, bamboo flooring, a custom-built tile tub that's perfectly child-size. Here, they get to have what they love, what they've designed together, and they don't have to stress if they want to go spend a few months in the mountains. They definitely get some looks from "big housers," but it doesn't faze them. Thomas Jefferson, Henry David Thoreau and Laura Ingalls Wilder probably got some looks, too.

Kacey Musgraves sang it best: "Who needs a house up on a hill when you can have one on four wheels and take it anywhere the wind might blow?"

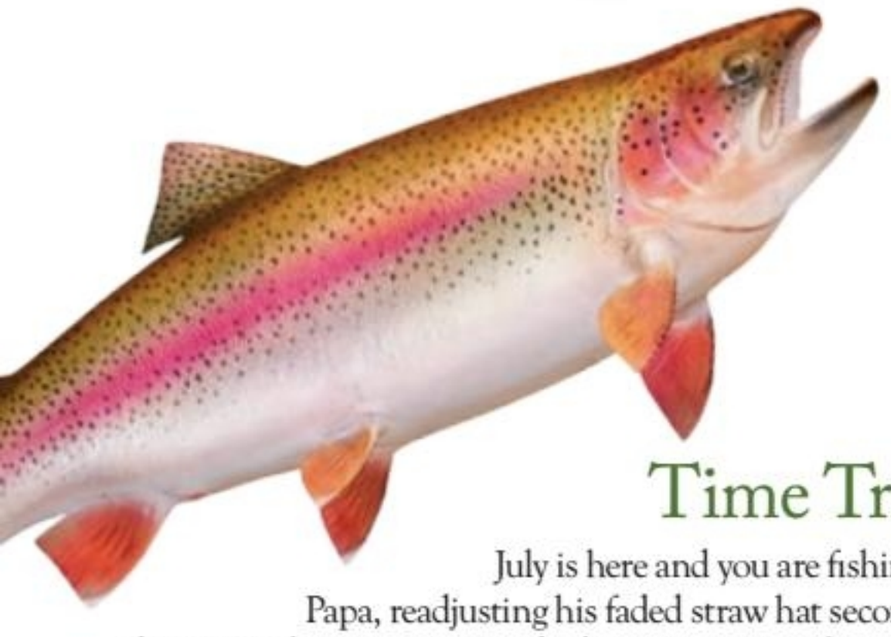
Find Jess's jewelry and wellness products online at www.phoenixmakes.com

Isabel Zermani, our former senior editor, prefers the storied – and mobile – life.

ALMANAC

July

By Ash Alder



Time Traveling

July is here and you are fishing on the bank with Papa, readjusting his faded straw hat seconds before it slips down your brow again. You don't notice. You are busy staring at the water's surface, thinking about the dancing cricket at the end of the line.

Summer sends us time traveling. Shucking sweet corn on the front porch with mama. Potato sack racing with your cousins. Sparklers on the lawn.

Ripe blackberries straight from the bush, but nothing tastes sweeter than summer love. You relive that first kiss, stolen beneath the Southern magnolia, and daydream at the pool with flushed cheeks and pruned fingers.

Papa reaches for the bagged lunch you packed together, unwraps a tomato sandwich, takes a pull of iced tea from the thermos. He is flashing back to his own childhood summers when you feel the tug on your line.

You wrestle a tiny sunfish, straw hat now slipping down past your eyelids. The fish is too small to take home, but Papa won't let you know it. He puts down his sandwich to help you remove the hook. You slip your first-ever catch into Papa's bucket. He lifts the straw hat from your eyes, winks, and then kisses your brow.

Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass on a summer day listening to the murmur of water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is hardly a waste of time.

— John Lubbock

Full Buck Moon Magic

Sure as our summer garden delivers fresh cabbage (read sauerkraut), July inspires cucumber salad, pickled melon, cantaloupe gazpacho, blueberries and whipped cream. Fourth of July falls on a Tuesday this month. We prepare for backyard barbecues, look for cool and simple dishes to delight friends and family.

At market, baskets of golden peaches spell homemade ice cream. The kids will love it. Hosting or traveling, stock up on pickled okra, scuppernongs, and heirloom tomatoes. This is a season that knows how to throw a delicious party. We oblige.

The Full Buck Moon falls on Sunday, July 9. If you're gardening by the lunar cycle, pop flowering bulbs such as gladiolus and butterfly lily into the earth July 10–22 — day before the new moon. Not too late to plant squash, corn or snap beans, plus heat-loving herbs like basil, thyme and sage.

Summer doesn't last forever. We've lived long enough to know that. As the cicadas serenade you into dreamland, allow visions of your autumn garden to come into focus. A gardener must always plan ahead.

Larks and Nymphs

Seeing as the spur of this month's birth flower resembles the hind toe of a crested songbird, it's little wonder how *delphinium consolida* got its common name. Larkspur (or Lark's heel as Shakespeare called it) belongs to the buttercup family and, like the orchid, is a showy and complex flower. It's also highly poisonous if consumed — but perhaps that's what makes this striking beauty all the more appealing. Color variations convey different meanings. Purple says first love.

Water lilies aren't just for frogs. Also a birth flower of July, genus *Nymphaea* takes its name from the Greek word meaning "water nymph" or "virgin." A symbol of purity and majesty, the lotus flower is a spiritual icon in many cultures. Chinese Buddhists describe Heaven as a sacred lake of lotus flowers. Imagine.

Something Different Dept.

Among the obscure holidays celebrated this month — Sidewalk Egg Frying Day (July 4), National Nude Day (July 14), and Yellow Pig Day (July 17), to name just a few — Build A Scarecrow Day is celebrated on Sunday, July 2. Egyptian farmers swaddled wooden figures with nets to create the first "scarecrows" in recorded history. Only they weren't scarecrows, per se. They were used to keep quails from the wheat fields along the Nile River. If you've a corn crop to protect, consider making an art of it. But just remember, crows are smart cookies — and perhaps better friends than foe.

Arts Calendar

Ocean City Jazz Festival

7/1-2

Fireworks By the Sea

7/3

Battleship 101

7/8

7/1 & 2 — Ocean City Jazz Festival

5 p.m. Contemporary jazz festival featuring live performances, food trucks, beer, wine and a silent auction. Artists include Wycliffe Gordon, Jackiem Joyner, Randy Brecker, Lao Tizer with Karen Briggs, Gerald Veasley, John Brown Quintet, John Dillard, and Lynn Grissett. Admission: $15–65. Ocean City Community Center, 2649 Island Drive, N. Topsail Beach. Info: oceancityjazzfest.com.

7/1–4 — NC 4th of July Festival

8 a.m. – 9 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. –10 p.m. (Sunday); 8 a.m. – 10 p.m. (Monday); 7 a.m. – 10 p.m. (Tuesday). Patriotic celebration featuring an arts and crafts show, historic church tours, classic car show, food vendors, children's games, live music, beach activities, skate and shag competitions, raffles, parade, fireworks and more. Various venues in Southport & Oak Island. Info: (910) 457-5578 or www.nc4thofjuly.com.

7/2 — North Carolina Symphony

7:30 p.m. Celebrate the 4th with the North Carolina Symphony's "Stars & Stripes," a performance of old-fashioned red, white and blue favorites. Admission: $20-45. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. Info: 910-362-7999 or www.capefearstage.com.

7/3 — Fireworks By the Sea

6 p.m. (music); 9 p.m. (fireworks). Independence Day celebration in Carolina Beach featuring live music from Rebekah Todd and the Odyssey followed by a fireworks show. Admission: Free. Carolina Beach Boardwalk, Carolina Beach Avenue South, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or www.pleasureislandnc.org.

7/4 — 4th of July Celebration

6–9 p.m. (celebration); 9–10 p.m. (fireworks). Downtown celebration including food vendors, live music and fireworks along the Cape Fear River. Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-4602 or www.wilmingtonnc.gov.

7/4-24 — Live Theater

6 p.m. (reception); 7 p.m. (performance); 9 p.m. (fireworks). The Thalian Association Community Theatre presents *Mr. Roberts*. July 4th opening night reception and fireworks. The play is set aboard a U.S. cargo ship in the Pacific Ocean during World War II. Live opening night performance on the *USS North Carolina* battleship, followed by the city fireworks show. Admission: $25–50. *USS North Carolina*, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

7/6 — Book Talk

2 p.m. *To Any Soldier: A Novel of Vietnam Letters*. Book discussion chronicling the lives of Jay Fox and Ashley Beth Justice during the Vietnam War, presented by co-author Kathryn Watson Quigg. RSVP no later than Wednesday, July 5th. Admission: Free. Brightmore Independent Living, 2324 S. 41st St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-1980 or www.brightmoreofwilmington.com.

7/7 — Airlie Gardens Concert

6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Outdoor live performance by the Wilmington Big Band at Airlie Gardens. Food and beverage available onsite. Parking information available online. Admission: $2–9; free for Airlie members. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.airliegardens.org.

7/7–9 — King Mackerel Tournament

12 p.m. – 11 p.m. (Friday); 2 p.m. – 11 p.m.

Dance Program

7/13

Seaglass Salvage Market

7/14-15

Airlie Gardens Concert

7/21

(Saturday); 12 p.m. – 7 p.m. (Sunday). Annual Pleasure Island King Mackerel fishing tournament featuring a captain's meeting, 50/50 raffle, kick-off party, live music, weigh-in and awards ceremony. Canal Drive, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 470-1734 or www.gotemonliveclassic.com.

7/8 Battleship 101

9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. & 12–2 p.m. Volunteers stationed throughout the WWII ship engage visitors in the areas of gunnery, radar, sickbay, galley and engineering. Admission: $6–12. Battleship North Carolina, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

7/10–28 Yoga Teacher Training

7 a.m. – 6 p.m. Kunga Yoga teacher training teaches skills for "living yoga" on and off the mat while working toward the 200-hour certification. It provides an opportunity to learn about different traditions within one cumulative program. Admission: $2,950 for 200-hour certification course. Wilmington Yoga Center, 5329 Oleander Drive, Suite 200, Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-0234 or wilmingtonyogacenter.com.

7/13 Dance Program

2 p.m. The second part of a three-part series on the exploration of dance. presented by a Hoggard High School student showcasing how society has evolved to produce the modern style of dance. RSVP no later than Wednesday, 7/10. Admission: Free. Brightmore Independent Living, 2298 S. 41st St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-1980 or www.brightmoreofwilmington.com.

7/14-30 Lumina Festival of the Arts

7:30 p.m. (Friday); Two-week arts festival featuring a variety of events in opera, dance, theatre, film, music, performance poetry, and visual art. Admission: Free–$50. Various venues within UNCW, 601 S. College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts/lumina.

7/15 Garden Talk

2 p.m. "Four Seasons of the Southern Garden: Living with the Natives." Master gardener Jon Wooten discusses garden plants that are native to North Carolina. Admission: Free. Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6371 or www.nhclibrary.org.

7/14 & 15 Seaglass Salvage Market

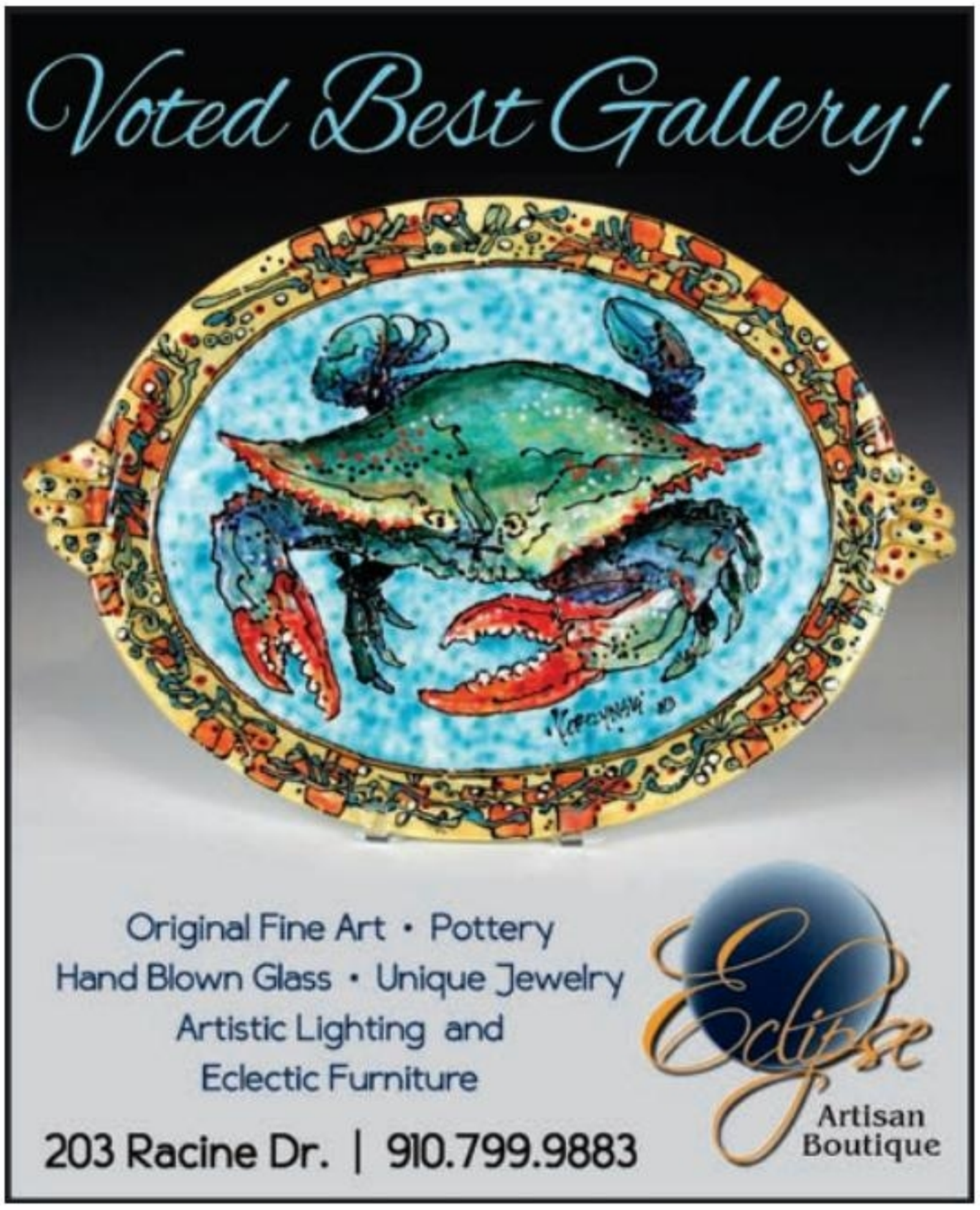
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday). Once a month indoor/outdoor market filled with up cycled, recycled and repurposed furniture and home décor items, salvage pieces perfect for DIY projects, yard and garden décor, jewelry and local honey. Admission: Free. 1987 Andrew Jackson Highway (Hwy 74/76), Leland. Info: www.seaglasssalvagemarket.com.

7/19 Youth Program

10:30 – 11:15 a.m. Turtles – Sea Turtles and Land Turtles. The museum will have a volunteer from the Wrightsville Beach Sea Turtle Project discussing sea turtles and the difference between sea and land turtles. Event includes a book about sea turtles, a craft, and light refreshments. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach, 303 W. Salisbury St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2569 or wbmuseumofhistory.com.

7/20 A Veteran's Recovery Journey

2 p.m. Presentation by Johnnie Puckett, president and cofounder of Recovery Resource Center, who shares his journey to recovery after his time in Vietnam. RSVP no later than Wednesday, 7/19. Admission: Free. Brightmore Independent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Living, 2324 S. 41st St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-1980 or www.brightmoreofwilmington.com.

7/21 Airlie Gardens Concert
6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Outdoor live performance by L Shape Lot at Airlie Gardens. Food and beverages available onsite. Parking information available online. Admission: $2–9; free for Airlie members. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.airliegardens.org.

7/21–23 Yoga Teacher Training
5–9 p.m. (Friday); 12–7:30 p.m. (Saturday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Restorative yoga teacher training with Noelle Whittington teaches how to relax the body and mind. Admission: $325–375. Wilmington Yoga Center, 5329 Oleander Drive, Suite 200, Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-0234 or wilmingtonyogacenter.com.

7/28 Fourth Friday
6–9 p.m. Downtown galleries, studios and art spaces open their doors to the public in an after-hours celebration of art and culture. Admission: Free. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

7/28–30 Chronic Pain Yoga Workshop
6–9 p.m. (Friday); 8:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. (Saturday); 8:30 a.m. –5:30 p.m. (Sunday). Learn practices of asana, pranayama and meditation that benefits chronic pain, fibromyalgia, headaches, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's. Admission: $350–400. Wilmington Yoga Center, 5329 Oleander Drive, Suite 200, Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-0234 or wilmingtonyogacenter.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday Wrightsville Farmers Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside beach market offering a variety of fresh, locally grown produce, baked goods, plants and unique arts and crafts. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

Monday – Wednesday Cinematique Films
7 p.m. Independent, classic and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Fourth Friday

7/28

Tuesday Wine Tasting
6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional, plus wine and small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 S. Front St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam
8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 S. Fifth Ave. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday Ogden Farmers Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local farmers, producers and artisans sell fresh fruits, veggies, plants, eggs, cheese, meat, honey, baked goods, wine, bath products and more. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/events-calendar/ogden-farmers-market.

Wednesday Poplar Grove Farmers Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Wednesday); 3–7 p.m. (Thursday). Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods and handmade artisan crafts. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 N., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM
12:30–1:30 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to begin-

ner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday — Wednesday Echo

7:30–11:30 p.m. Weekly singer/songwriter open mic night that welcomes all genres of music. Each person will have 3–6 songs. Palm Room, 11 E. Salisbury St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-3040.

Thursday — Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday — Wrightsville Beach Sounds of Summer

6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Annual family-friendly outdoor concert series in Wrightsville Beach featuring local bands every Friday evening. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Park, 3 Bob Sawyer Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7900 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

Friday — Movies in the Park

8 p.m. Showings of family-friendly movies including *Pete's Dragon* (7/7), *Storks* (7/14), *The Secret Life of Pets* (7/21), and *Moana* (7/28), presented by Surf City Parks and Recreation. Movies begin just after sunset. Admission: Free. Soundside Park, 517 Roland Ave., Surf City. Info: (910) 328-4887 or www.surfcity.govoffice.com.

Friday & Saturday — Dinner Theater

7 p.m. TheatreNOW presents Robert Aguirre-Sacasa's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, based on the novel by Oscar Wilde. Runs from 7/28 – 8/6. TheatreNOW, 19 S. 10th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3now or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Saturday — Carolina Beach Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island-style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, wines meats, baked goods, herbal products and handmade crafts. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 & Atlanta Ave., Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2977 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Saturday — Riverfront Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

Sunday — Bluewater Waterfront Music

4–7 p.m. Summer concerts on the waterfront patio. Bands include Back of the Boat, Category 4, and Volume. Admission: Free. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8500 or www.bluewaterdining.com.

To add a calendar event, please contact calendar@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

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Port City People

"British Invasion"

14th Annual Making Legends Local Gala

Saturday, April 29, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Danny Pera, Dr. Yael Gold (bottom left), Gregg Thomas, Kendra Kellermann, David Eckles, Phyllis Goodson

Joe Brown, Lee Anne Quattrucci, Amie Sloane, Dr. Slade Suchecki

Daynen Orr, Reese Crawley

Rich Novelli, Cathy Meriam, Lance Oehrlein

Todd Godbey, Jessica Probst

David Eckles, Kendra Kellermann

Mirva Ywacoub, Ahmad Novra

Susan & John Hitt, Joe & Megan Baicy

Bucky Moorehead, Tim & Angie Vandenberg, Lisa Brooks

Susan Perry, Sheila Harrison, Sybil Stkes

Port City People

Palm Beach Grand

21st Annual Landfall Foundation Gala

Saturday, April 29, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Birgit & John Barsa, Gerda Strahl, Felicity & Dr. Dileep Bhagwat

Chuck Pearson, Joan Payne

James Crowell, Kim Pedersen

Chrissy & John Todd

Pia Ann Robison, Phil Hamlin

Sharon & Gregg Hamelin

Deidra & Bruce Kubeck

Jim & Monica Rolquin

Emily & Tom Lamb, Beth McGrath, Becky Spivey, Jessica & John Spencer

Ellen & Phil Pearsall

Port City People

Wilmington Wine & Food Festival

Bellamy Mansion

Friday - Saturday, May 12-13, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Gary Remlinger, Alexis Butera

Owen Canill, Marie Brooks

Josh & Jennifer Torok, Sarah & Andrew Walden

Jane & Matt Warzel

Laura & Alex Glass

Holly Russell, LB & Mandy Wilkins

Sandy & Craig Wilson, Chris & Kelly Buffalino

Chloe & Caleb Sowards

Beau & Kelt Cayton

Haley Claytor, Nelessa Lewis, Alexis Xenakis

Josh & Karen Kneeland

Elijah & Lyann Huston

Port City People

JDRF Hope Gala - "License to Cure"

Wilmington Convention Center

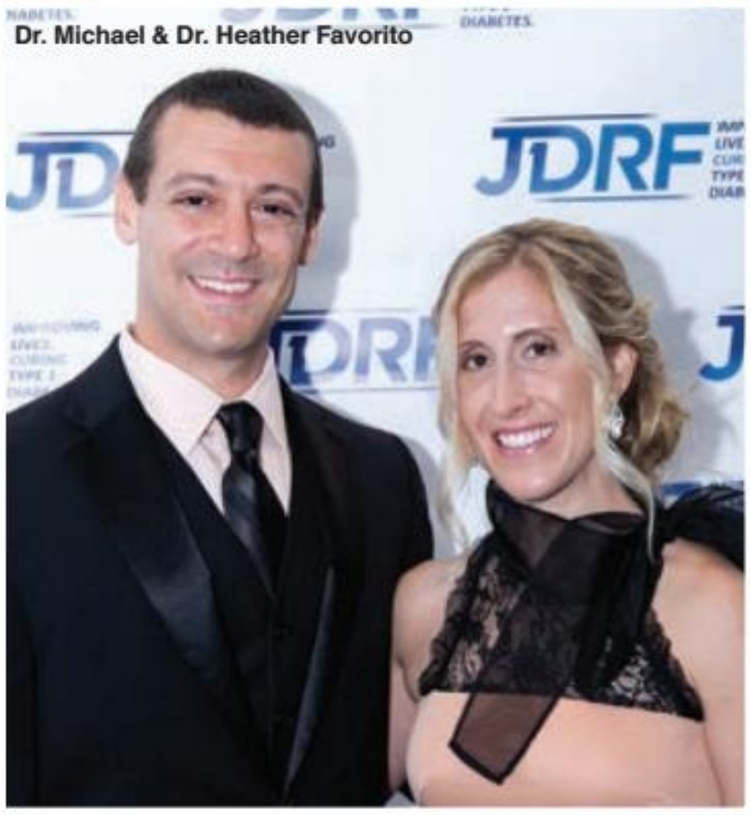
Saturday, May 20, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Amanda & Reynolds Miars

Hanes & Wren Mintz

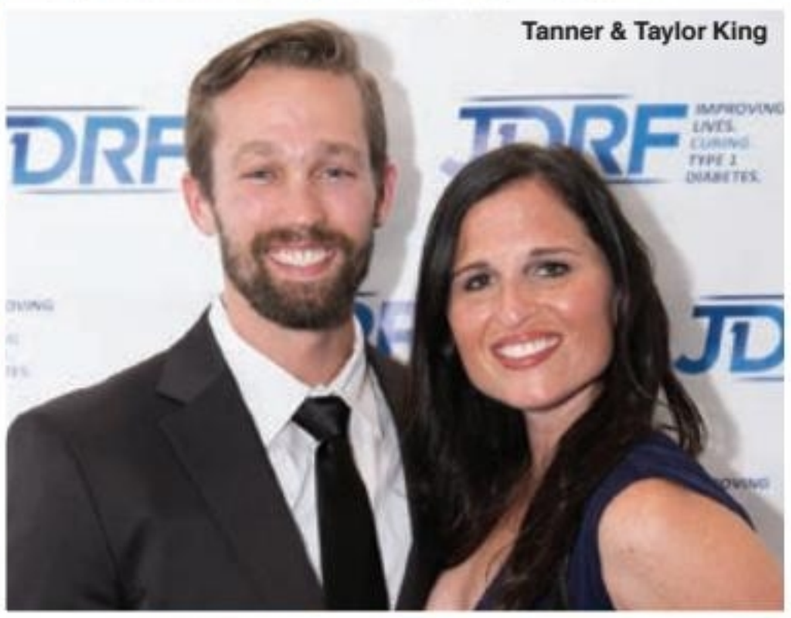
Abi & Michael Mattis


Dr. Michael & Dr. Heather Favorito

Teresa & Curt Hudson

Erin Fisher, Aaron Digregorio

Michelle & Scott Holmes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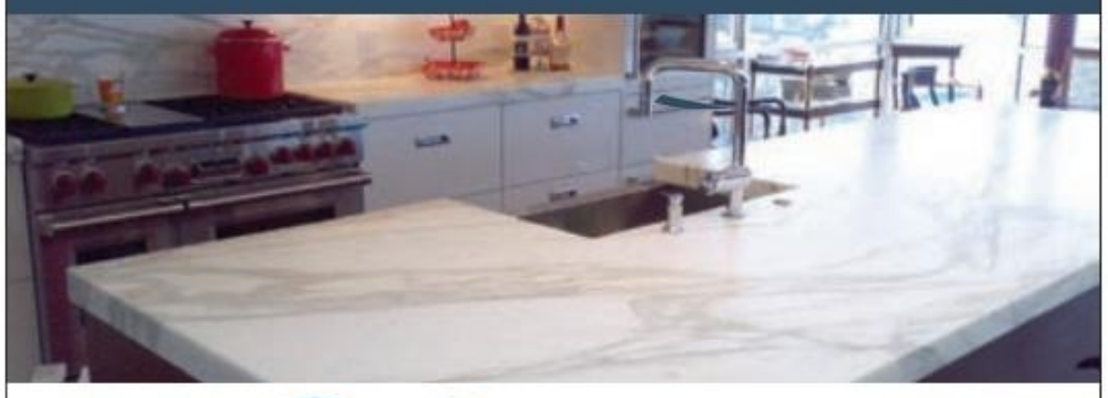

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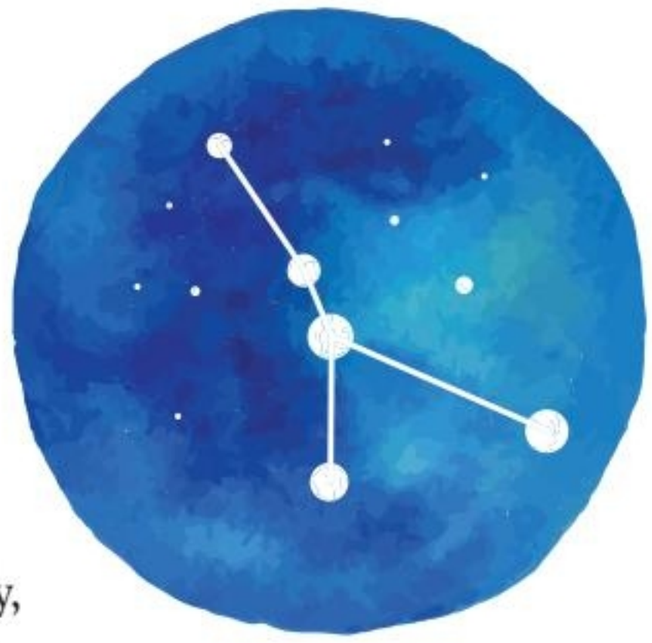


C'mon in . . . the Water's Fine, You Crabby Chic Cancer!

By Astrid Stellanova

Reliable and loved, you are – even if crabby. Let's not forget that you are nocturnal and persistent, but when disappointed you really, really wanna dart back into that shell and run for cover. Shifting sands under your feet make you skittish, but come on out and test the waters! You're in intense company, too: Nelson Mandela, Gary Busey, Tom Hanks, Princess Diana, Sylvester Stallone, Meryl Streep and Sofia Vergara all share the sign of the crusty critter. – Ad Astra, Astrid

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
Did somebody say crab cakes? If you had your druthers, you'd have your cake, top it with cholesterol-bustin' whipped cream, lob on some ice cream, and watch your health-nut buddies holler loud enough to blow out the birthday candles. Cancer babies have more friends than Carter had liver pills. But – when you start counting your blessings, Baby, and bless your heart you should – do add diligence to the list and forget that LDL number for *just one day*. You worked for what you have achieved, which goes to show that perspiration is more important than inspiration. Sweat, don't fret! And keep dreaming that big dream, cause it isn't too late to see it happen. But hey, nobody has to remind a Cancerian to be tenacious or to eventually trust, do they?

Leo (July 23–August 22)
Sugar, you're fast and nobody in your age class can beat you in a foot race. But collar that fight-or-flight impulse for now. Keep that dog on the porch –the one about to run to the front of the pack. You are this close to advancing to the lead without having to put one dirty sneaker on the ground.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
It was true you could splurge a little, but Honey, was that your idea of a try at wild abandon? Lord help us, you burned through cash like a Cub Scout with a pack of wet matches trying to burn a wet mule in a storm. So let's try this again: Indulge yourself, even if it is the Dairy Queen special at Happy Hour, OK?

Libra (September 23–October 22)
Count to ten. Say Amen. Bless your heart; you are fixin' to have a breakthrough. If you ever thought you had an idea that might be worth something, this one is *it*. Take care of the legal bits and don't go bragging at the farm supply about what you are up to until you have your horse saddled and you are ready to roll.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
What happened to you recently is about as obvious as a tick on a yellow dog. You are mad as all get out. You have a reason to be, but don't just do something. Sit there. Think it through before you start tootin' or tweetin' or bleatin'. A turnaround in your thinking and your temper is the gift in all this, Honey.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
Last month was about as much fun as a colonoscopy. This month is a reward – but don't get drunk as Cooter Brown just because the blame train left the station and you got a family pass. Bless your heart, you are about to have a big reveal concerning an old friend. Don't be surprised to learn an old love never forgot you.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
It amounted to no more than a hill of beans, Sugar, and that got you all het up. Now, you are ready to plow the back 40 just because that head of steam needs to be released. Bait a hook and go fishing. Whoever got your dander up, they were a small minnow in the fish pond, not Moby Dick, and let it pass. Forgiving thoughts are needed.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
You never should "coulda, woulda" on yourself. But you do. Honey, you are looking back over your shoulder way too much. The trouble is, you don't see the double rainbow looking backwards. This isn't a breakdown, but a breakthrough. When you're deep in it, they feel about the same. Time, this month, is your friend.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
It's blowin' up a storm and you put your favorite bathing suit on. That, Sugar, is part of your quirky charm and sunny nature. But right about now, galoshes and a raincoat might be needed. Take refuge in the fact that you have found a silver lining when just about anybody else couldn't. That is worth a lot and makes a mighty storm pass mighty fast.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
Sweatin' like a hooker in the front row at a tent revival? Well, you got called out for entertaining the choir with a story about the preacher and the teacher. It would be wise to hold your tongue a hot minute. Not everything that is confided in you is meant to wind up in one of your stories. Discretion, Darlin', is the word of the day.

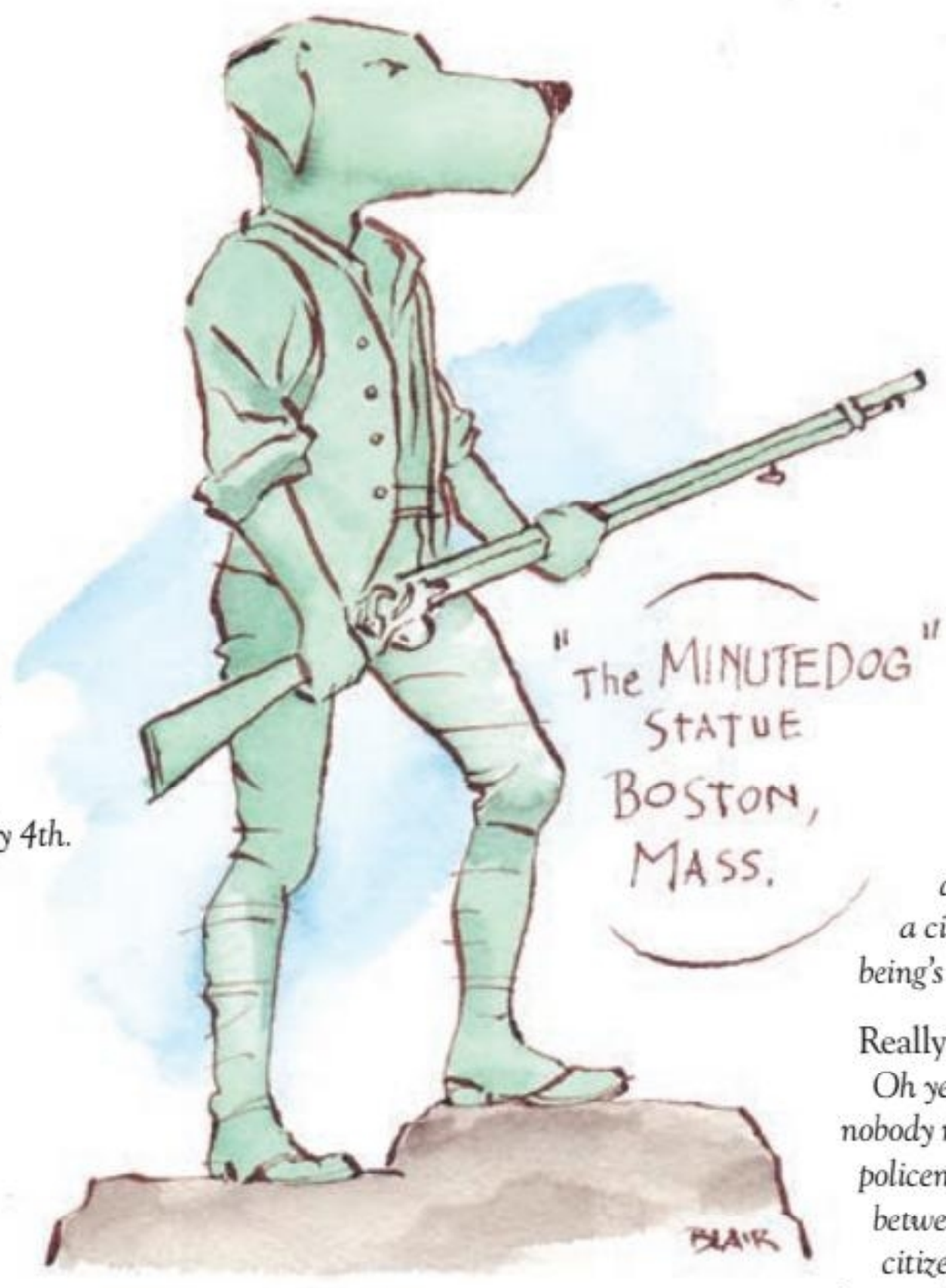
Taurus (April 20–May 20)
You've been navigating the China Store of Life like a bull on steroids. This is a breathe-deep-and-release time. You could scare your own Mama with your determination, and make small children shake in their boots. What almost nobody knows is what a sugar pie you really are. It won't cost a nickel to let a few more in on the secret, either.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
When the month ends, you will look back with no small pride over the fact that you finally acted like a grown-up, Honey Bunny. By turning the other cheek, you have passed a milestone. It was donkeywork for you, but you did it. Don't neglect your health right now, and drop a weight that could be on your shoulders.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Back at the Pound

Reflections on the Fourth



By Clyde Edgerton

Dog 1: What was all that shooting last night?

Dog 2: Wasn't shooting, it was fireworks. July 4th.

It was going until after midnight.
I know.

What is July 4th?
Independence Day.

What does that mean?
It means that America got its freedom from England on July 4th, 1776 – and citizens have been celebrating ever since. Once a year.

Gosh, that was a long time ago.
You bet.

Did anything change for dogs after 1776?
Naw. Same old stuff. Good owners; bad owners; some in-between.

What was wrong with England?
They had a king – and since we were part of England, he was our king.

What was wrong with that?
Well, nothing as long as the king was a good king. If he was a bad one, like the 1776 one was – I think his name was Louis the 15th – then bad things happened to people and dogs because they didn't have a chance to say what they wanted or needed. See, with a bad king, somebody could come into your owner's house and shoot you and the king wouldn't do anything about it.

Really?
That's right, but then when America got free, Americans, under the Founding Fathers, made a lot of rules that were better than the rules in England.

Like what?
Well, if somebody goes into somebody's house in America and shoots a dog then the police goes and gets the shooter, arrests him and then the justice system makes things right.

Really?
Oh, yes.

Who pays for that?
Well, the dog owner pays for that, of course. The dog owner has to buy property insurance to protect against the unwarranted and surprising destruction of a citizen's property – like if somebody breaks in a human being's house or steals a car, all that.

Really?
Oh yes. It's done with something called "insurance." Since nobody makes humans buy property they have to pay the policeman – on each policeman visit – a "co-pay." Somewhere between 15 and 90 dollars. Then insurance, bought by the citizen, pays the rest. Sometimes an employee might pay part of it somehow, something called Propertycaid. But the protection of a human's property is a human's responsibility in the end, so they pay for that protection out of their own pocket – it's not a "right."

But wouldn't everybody want to pitch in and help everybody else take care of their property? Like a big community where everybody looks out for everybody else. So that the police could be free? Maybe paid by taxes?
Oh no. Protection of property is not a right, it's privilege that people must pay for individually – or in groups.

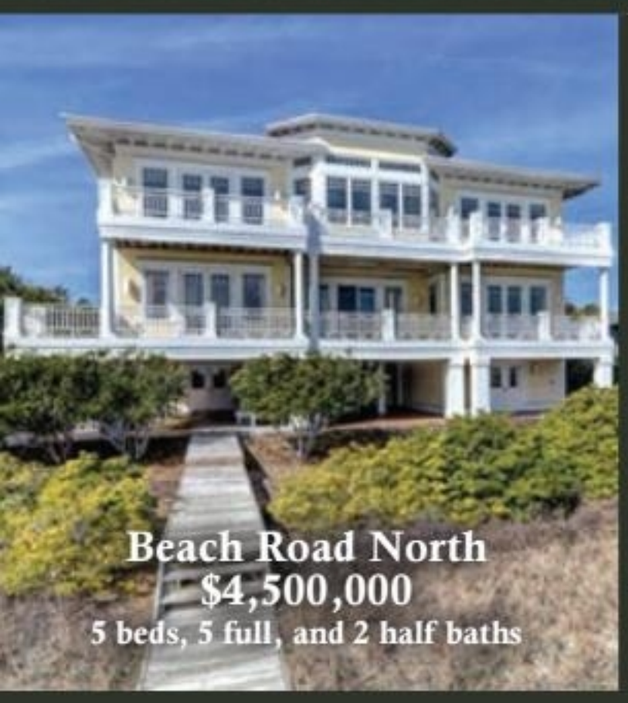
I don't get it. What about when a germ invades a human's body – why shouldn't people have to buy their insurance for that? Something like health insurance.
Humans can't predict if a germ is going to ruin their health or if cancer will invade their body. They pay taxes to take care of that kind of stuff – we band together as a community to take care of that since health is more important than property. That's why health care is free and police protection is not. Or is it the other way around? Hmmmm. Let me think. Surely property is not considered more protectable than health. Oh well, just be happy that since July 4th is over we don't have to worry about all that human noise until next year. And we don't have to worry about bad kings anymore either, thank goodness.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of 10 novels, a memoir and most recently, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

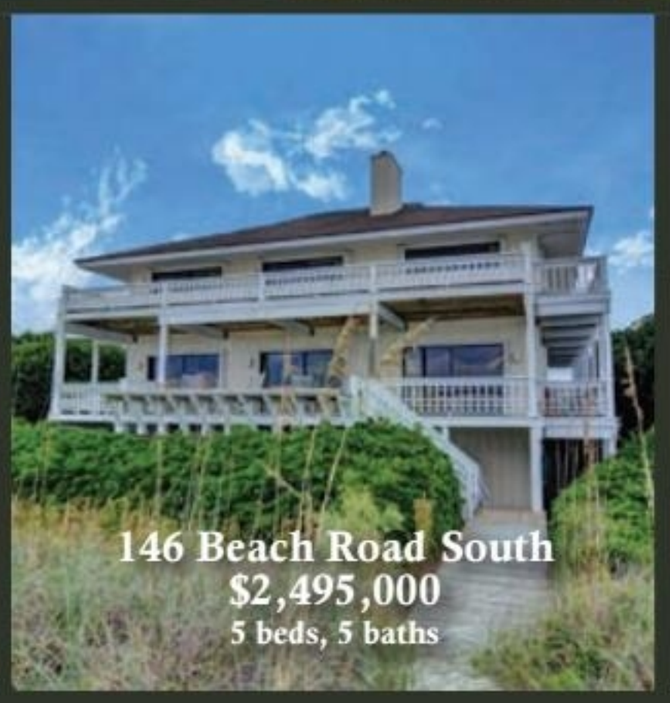
Discover Figure Eight Island

Ocean Front Offerings...



Beach Road North
$4,500,000
5 beds, 5 full, and 2 half baths

168 Beach Road South
$2,299,000
6 Beds, 5 Baths



146 Beach Road South
$2,495,000
5 beds, 5 baths

88 Beach Road South
$2,175,000
5 Beds, 4 Baths

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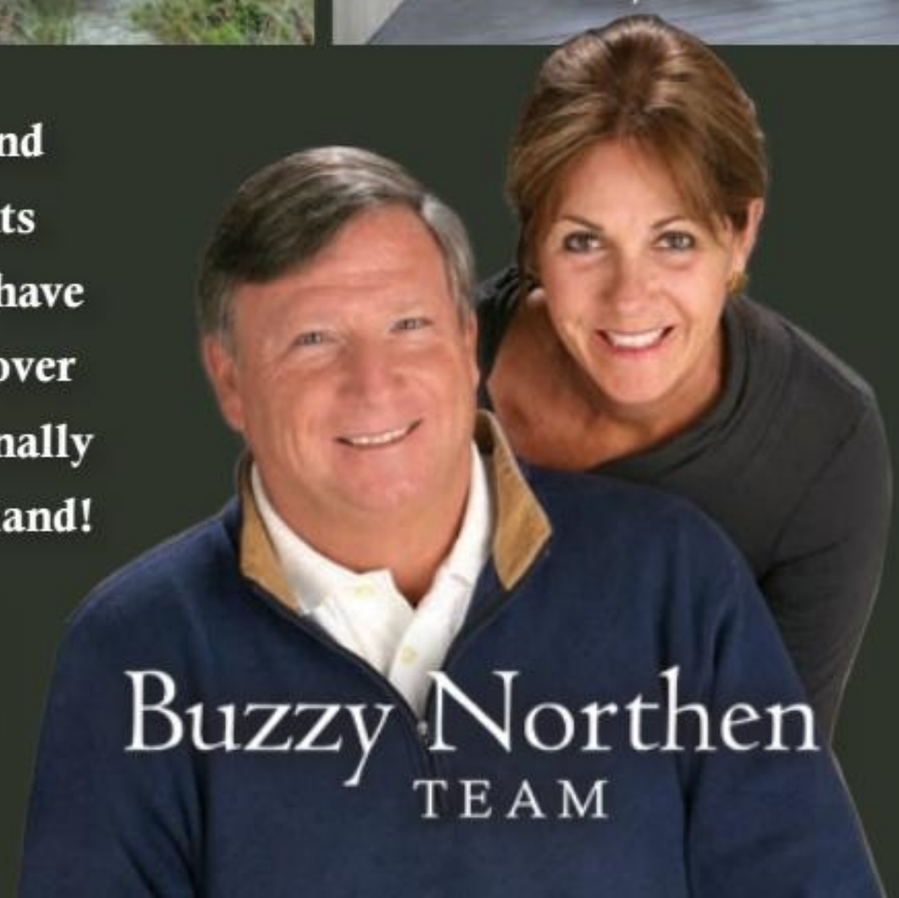

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